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THE NEW YORKER

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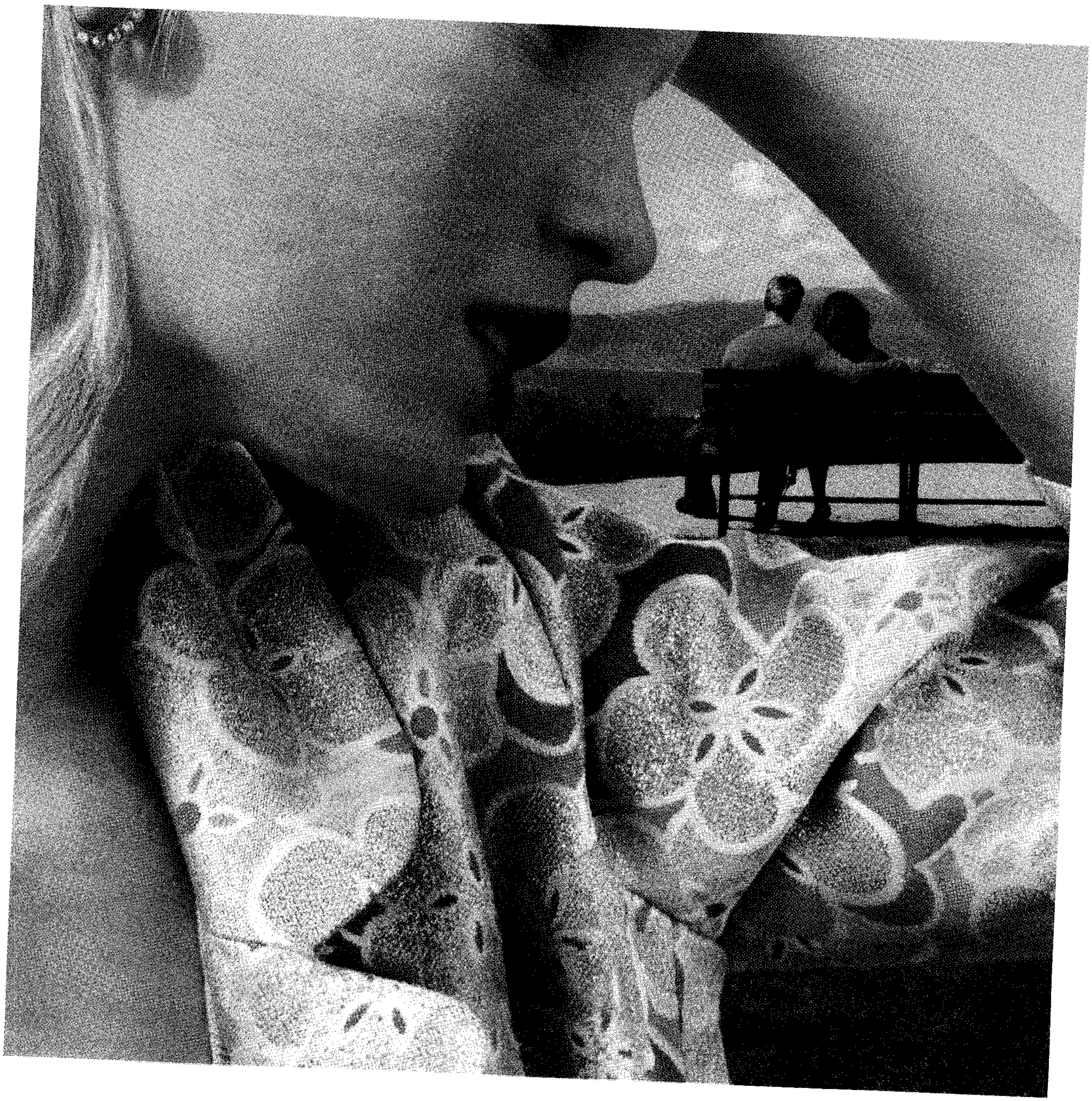
Even years later,
he would let Claire think
she saw him first.



They spoke about
many things
but in the end
decided Chinese sounded best.

As usual,
the postcards
he wrote
were still in their luggage.

How perfect.
Half a day went by
and still the car engine
wouldn't turn over.

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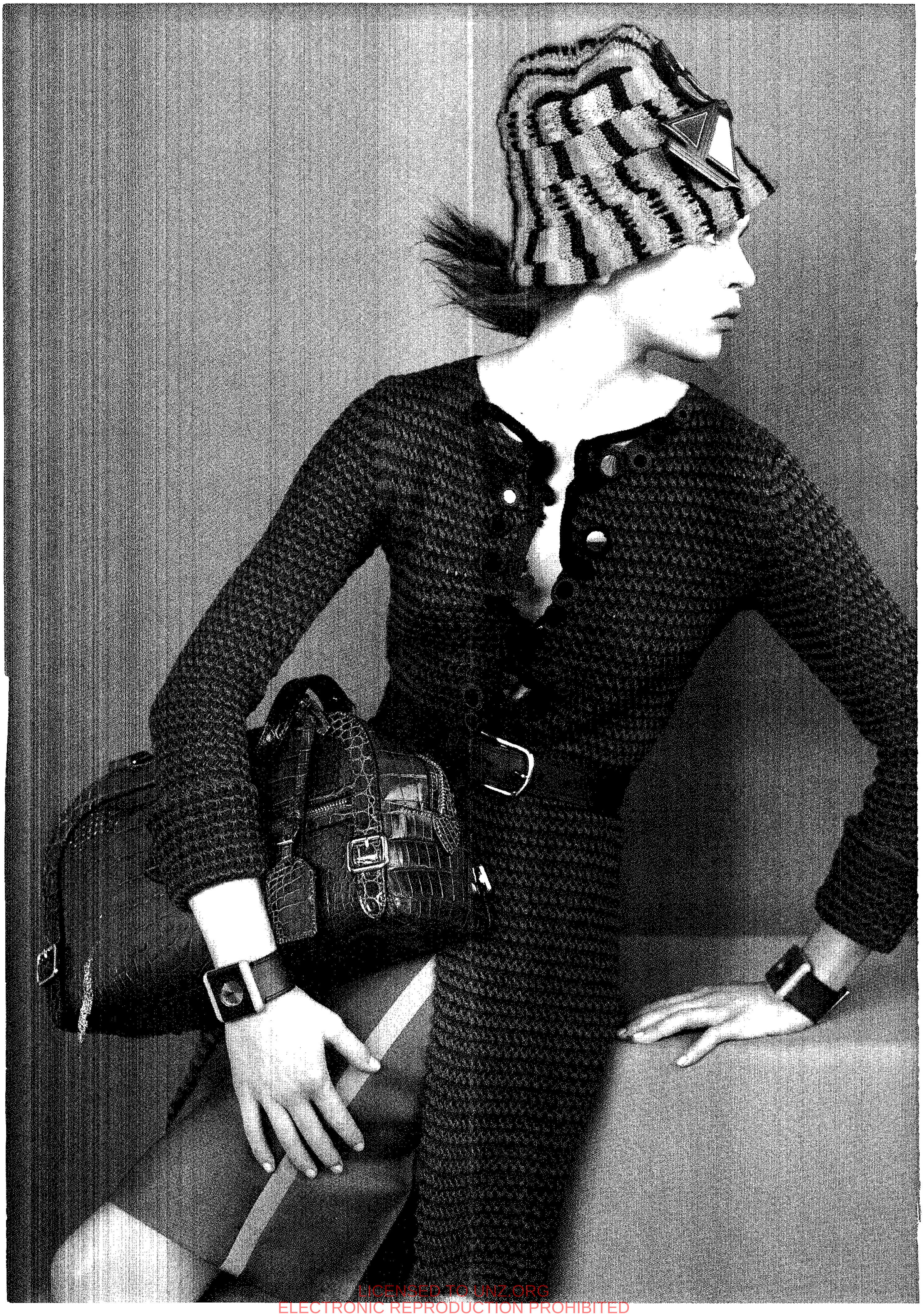

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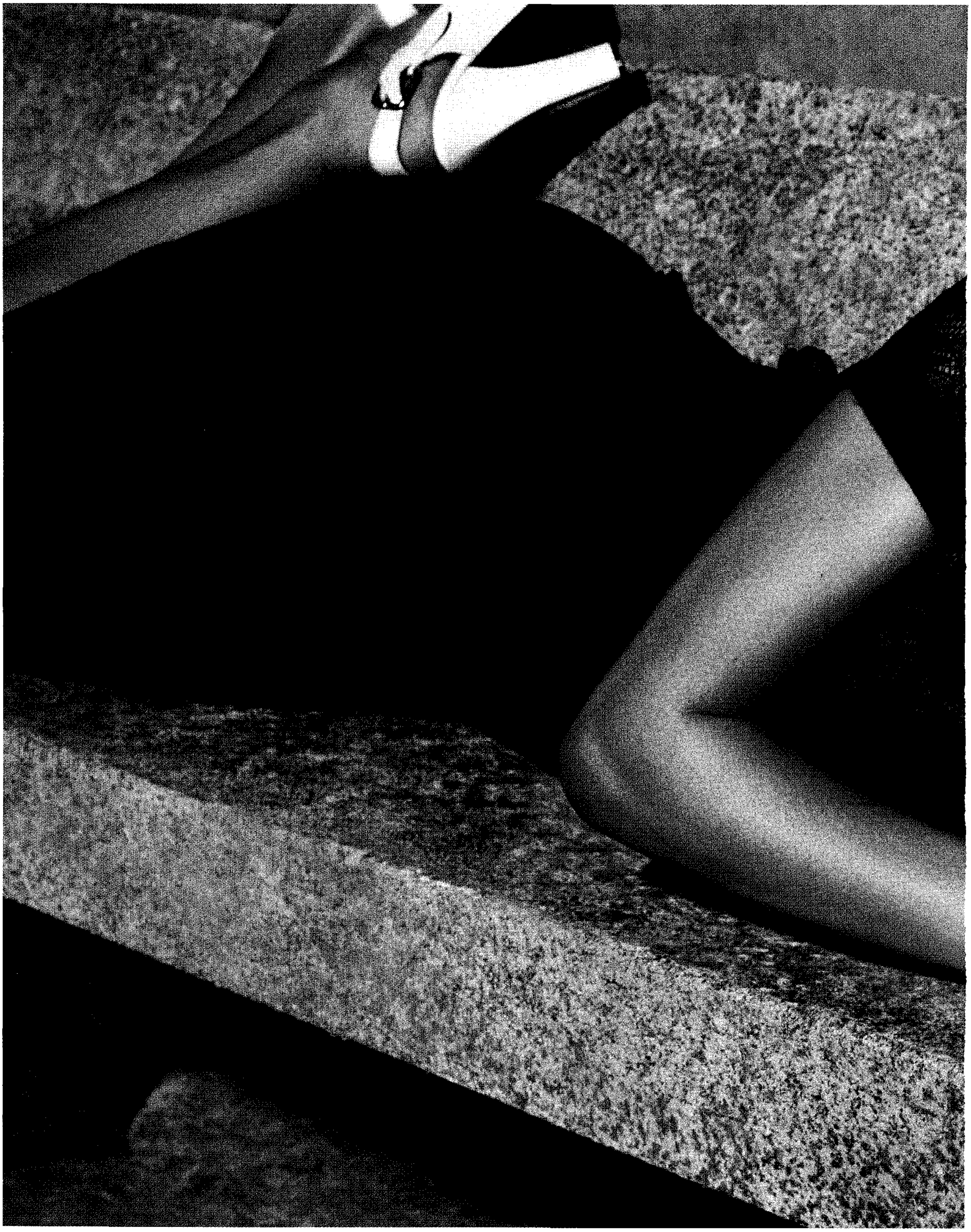

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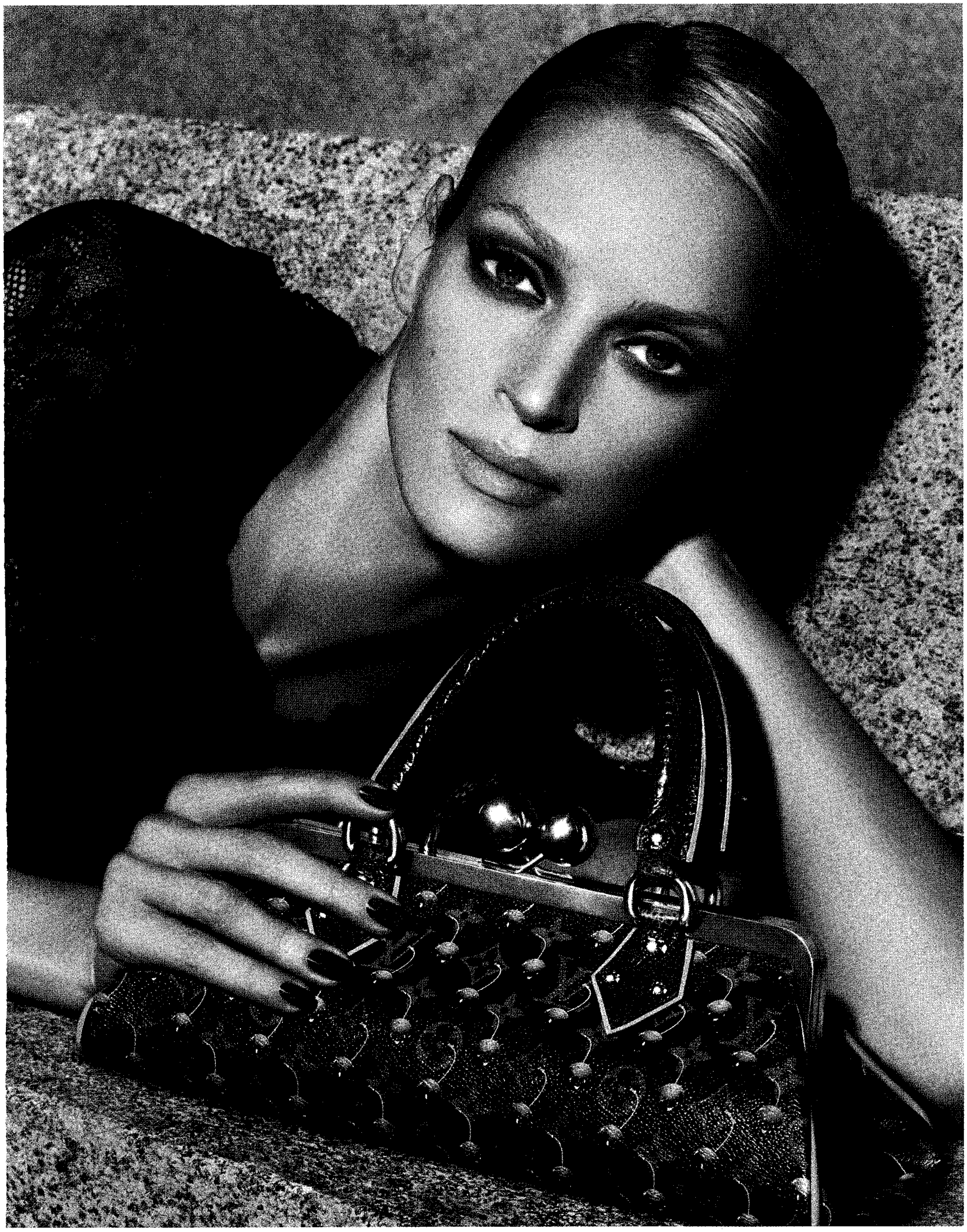

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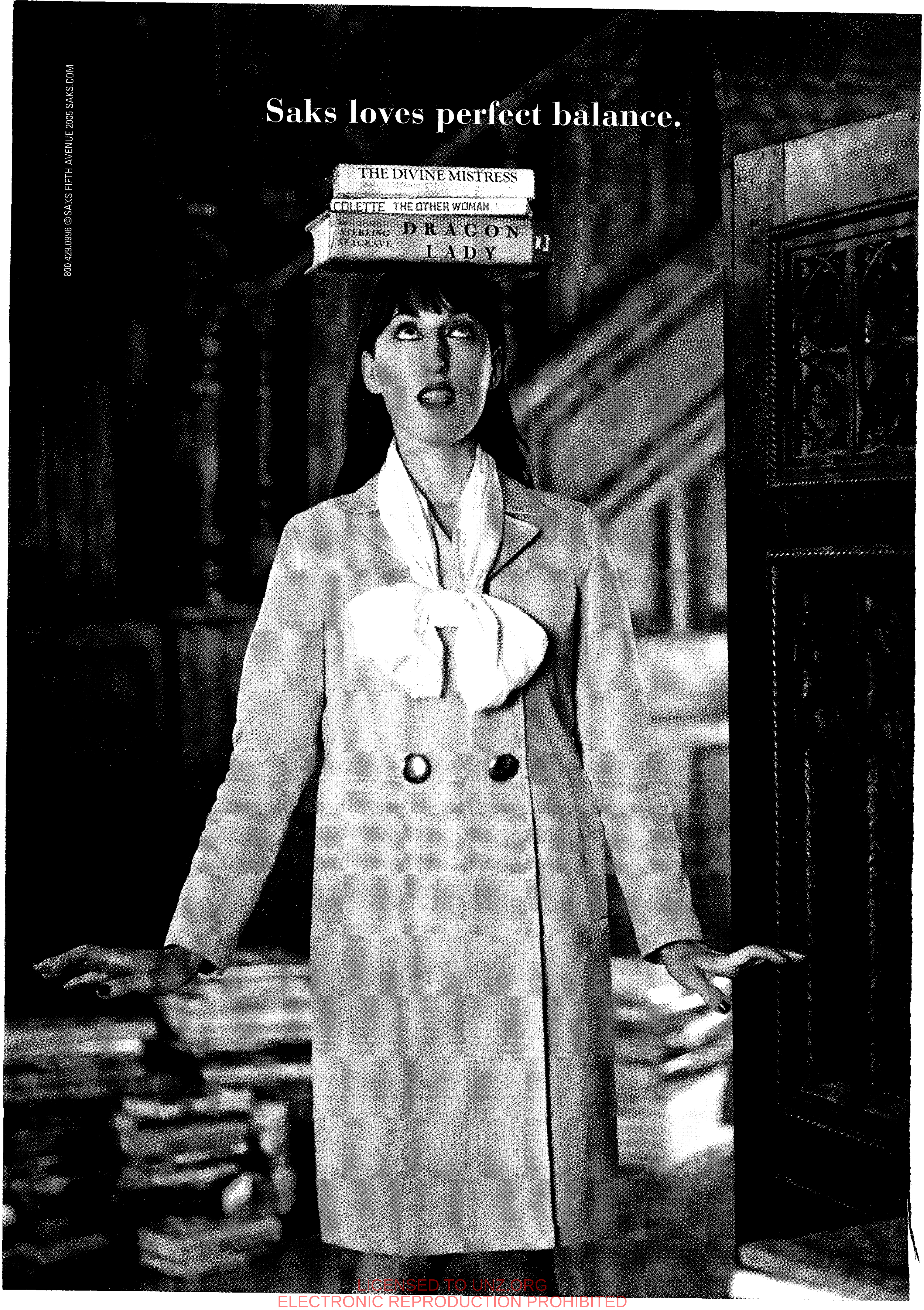
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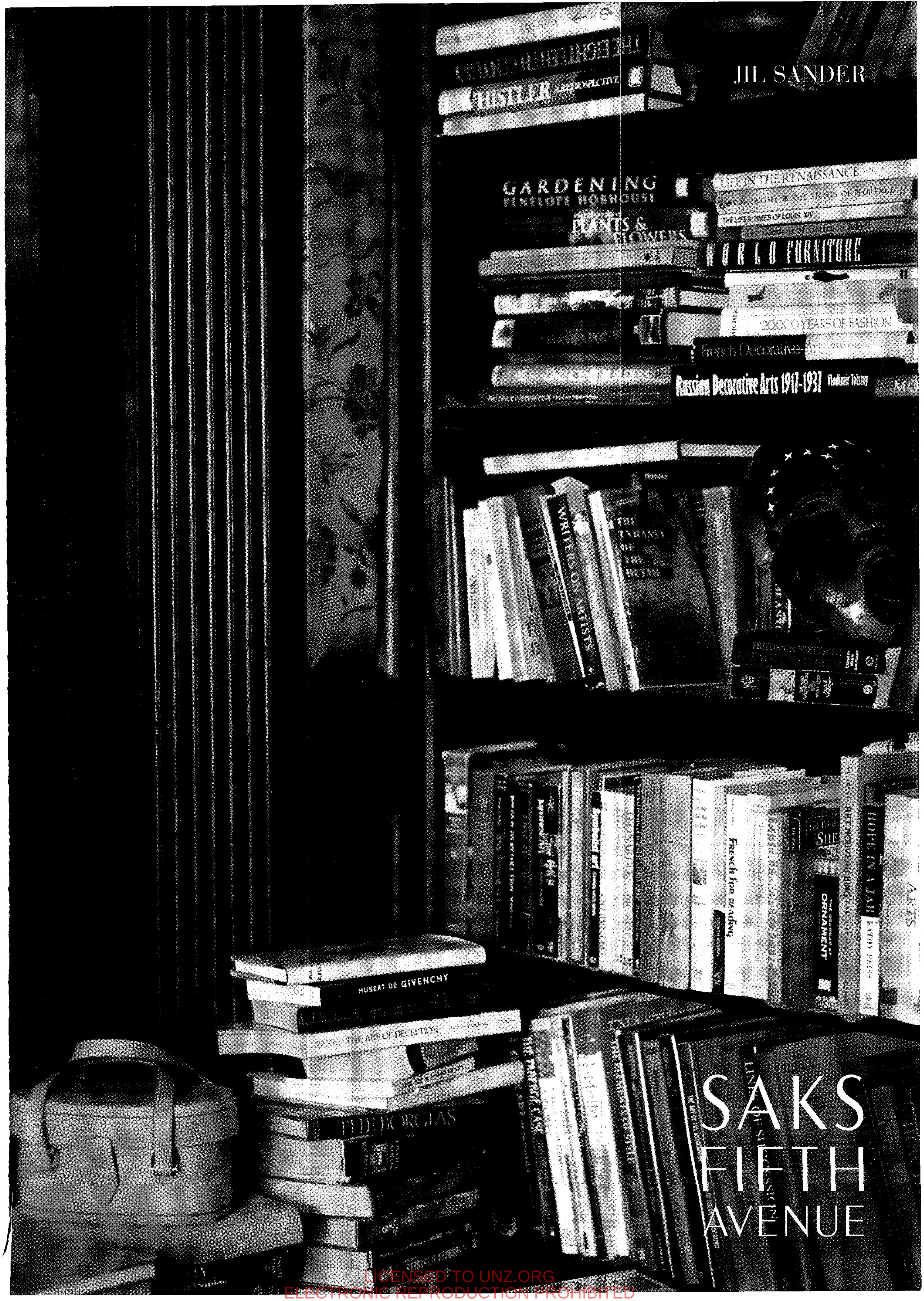
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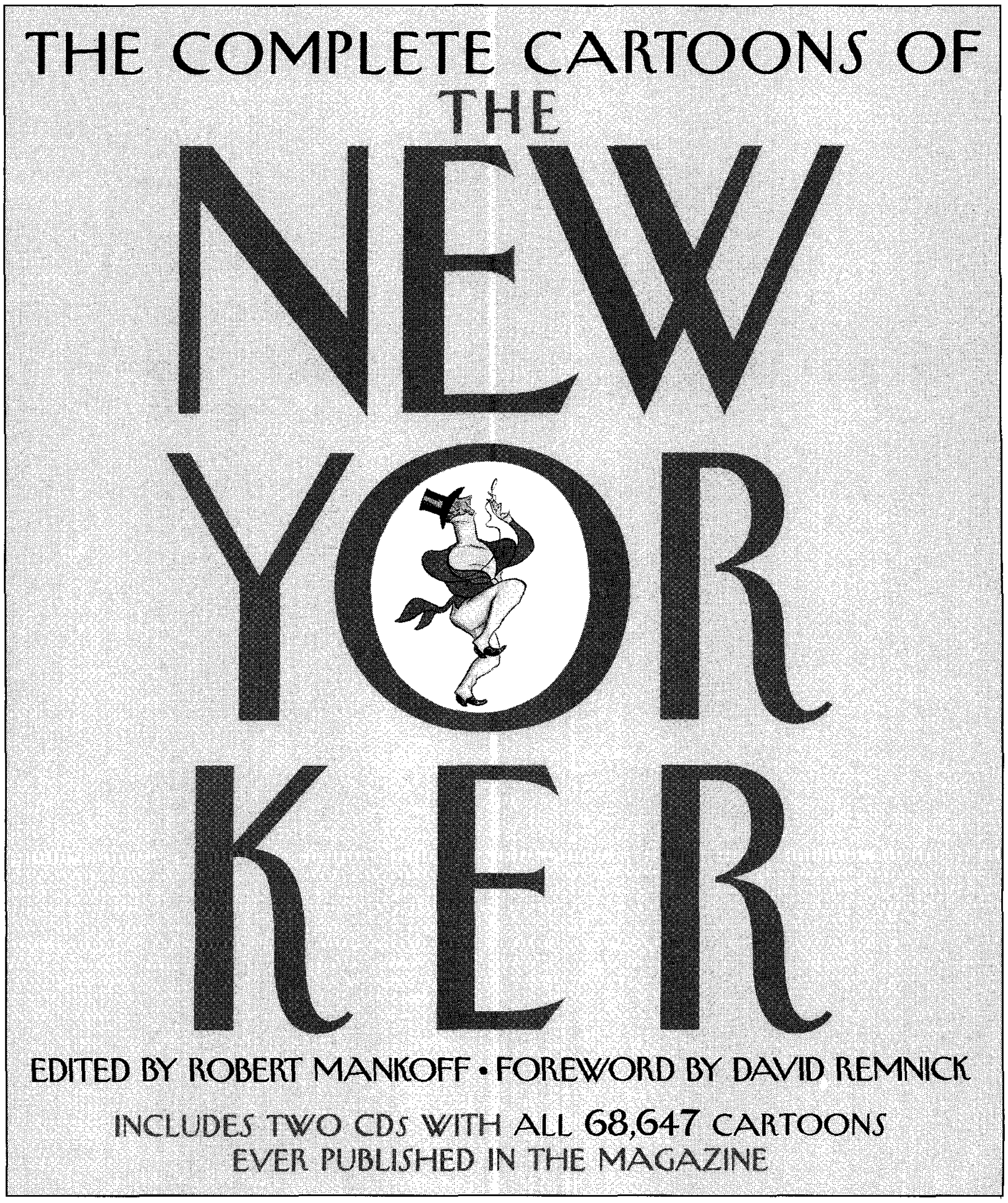

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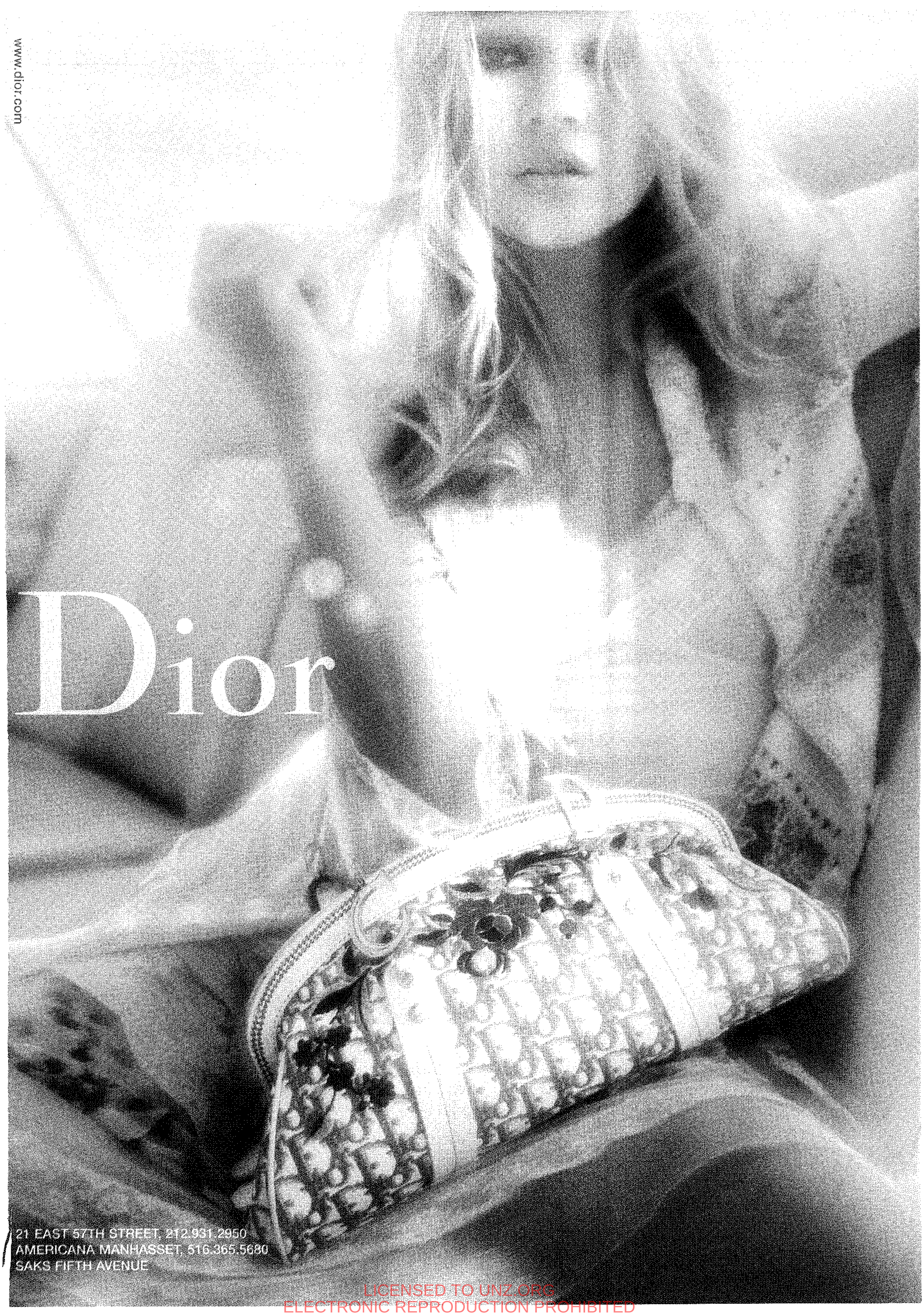

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MARCH 14, 2005

18 GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN
55 THE TALK OF THE TOWN
Filibusted; name that monkey.

Calvin Trillin 64 LETTER FROM ILLINOIS
Lost Son
A death in Iraq and the family left behind.

Anne Enright 102 FICTION
"Della"

STYLE SPECIAL

Chandler Burr 78 ANNALS OF INNOVATION
The Scent of the Nile
A master perfumer goes into the lab.

John Seabrook 90 BACKSTAGE NOTES
Hands and Eyes
Where Dolce stops and Gabbana begins.

Daniel Zalewski 110 PROFILES
Intelligent Design
Rem Koolhaas challenges architecture, again.

Michael Roberts, Daniel Mendelsohn 126 PORTFOLIO
Grecian Formula
How to dress like an ancient Athenian.

THE CRITICS

BOOKS

Adam Kirsch 132 *The poetry of Charles Bukowski.*
137 Briefly Noted
John Updike 138 *Jonathan Safran Foer's new novel.*
John Lahr 141 THE THEATRE
"Romance," "Dirty Rotten Scoundrels."
Nancy Franklin 143 ON TELEVISION
"America's Next Top Model."
Anthony Lane 145 THE CURRENT CINEMA
"Head On."

POEMS

Eliza Griswold 93 "Retreat"
Stanley Moss 108 "After Rodin's 'The Clouds'"
A. R. Ammons 124 "Tree Limbs Down"

COVER *"Just Duckie," by Maira Kalman* THE BACK PAGE *"Royal Wedding Day Schedule for H.M. Queen Elizabeth," by Paul Rudnick* DRAWINGS *Robert Mankoff, Mick Stevens, Charles Barsotti, Edward Koren, Eric Lewis, Sam Means, Carolita Johnson, Harry Bliss, Barbara Smaller, P. C. Vey, Tom Cheney, Lee Lorenz, David Sipress, Victoria Roberts, Jack Ziegler, Frank Cotham*

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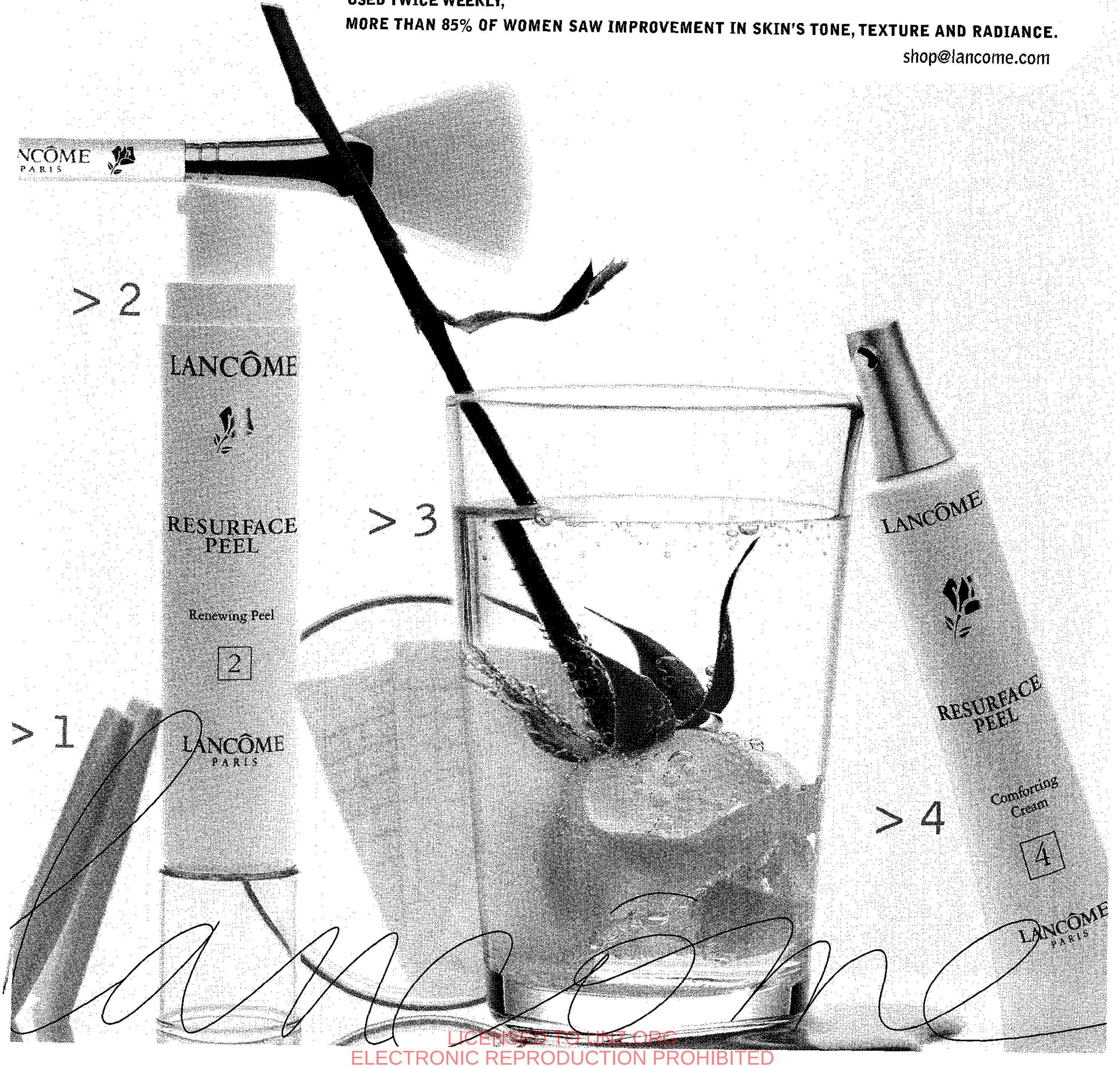
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CONTRIBUTORS

Daniel Zalewski ("Intelligent Design," p. 110) is the magazine's features editor.

Hendrik Hertzberg (Comment, p. 55) is the author of "Politics: Observations & Arguments, 1966-2004."

Jeffrey Toobin (The Talk of the Town, p. 58), a staff writer since 1993, is at work on a book about the Supreme Court.

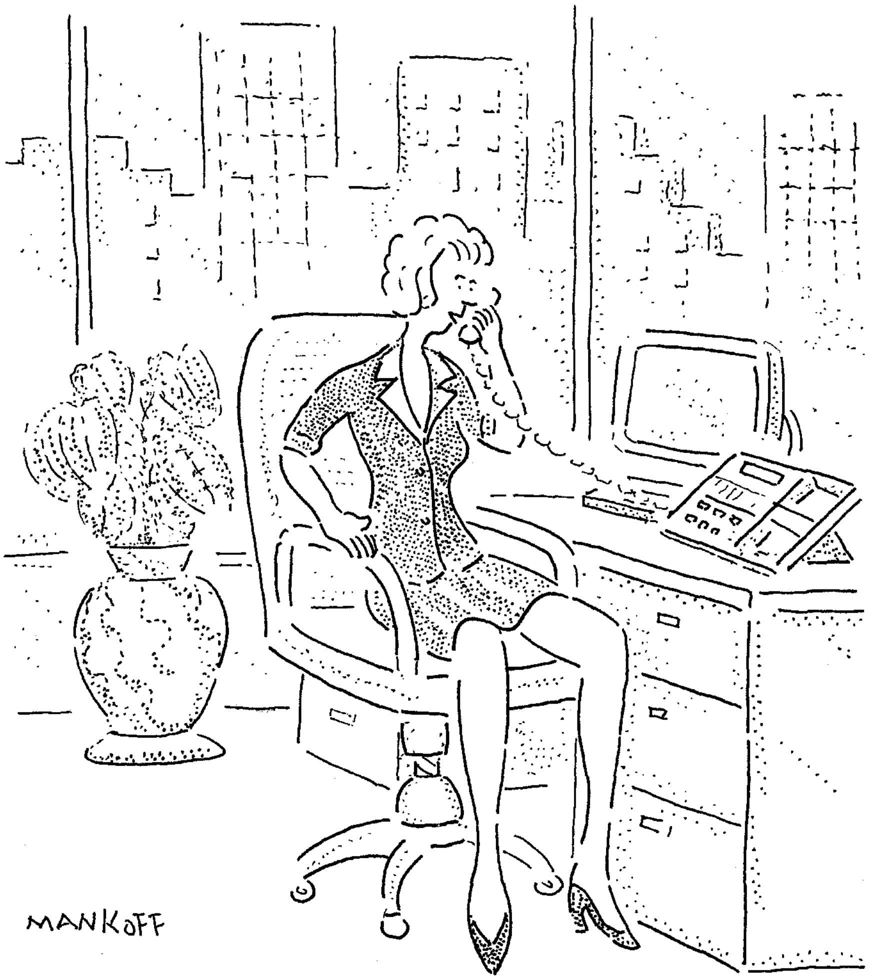
James Surowiecki (The Financial Page, p. 62) writes about business and finance. His book "The Wisdom of Crowds" comes out in paperback in August.

Michael Roberts (Portfolio, p. 126) is the magazine's fashion editor. He is the author of several children's books, including "Snowman in Paradise" and "Mumbo Jumbo." His new book, "M.R.," which includes a collection of his *New Yorker* cover art, will be published in September.

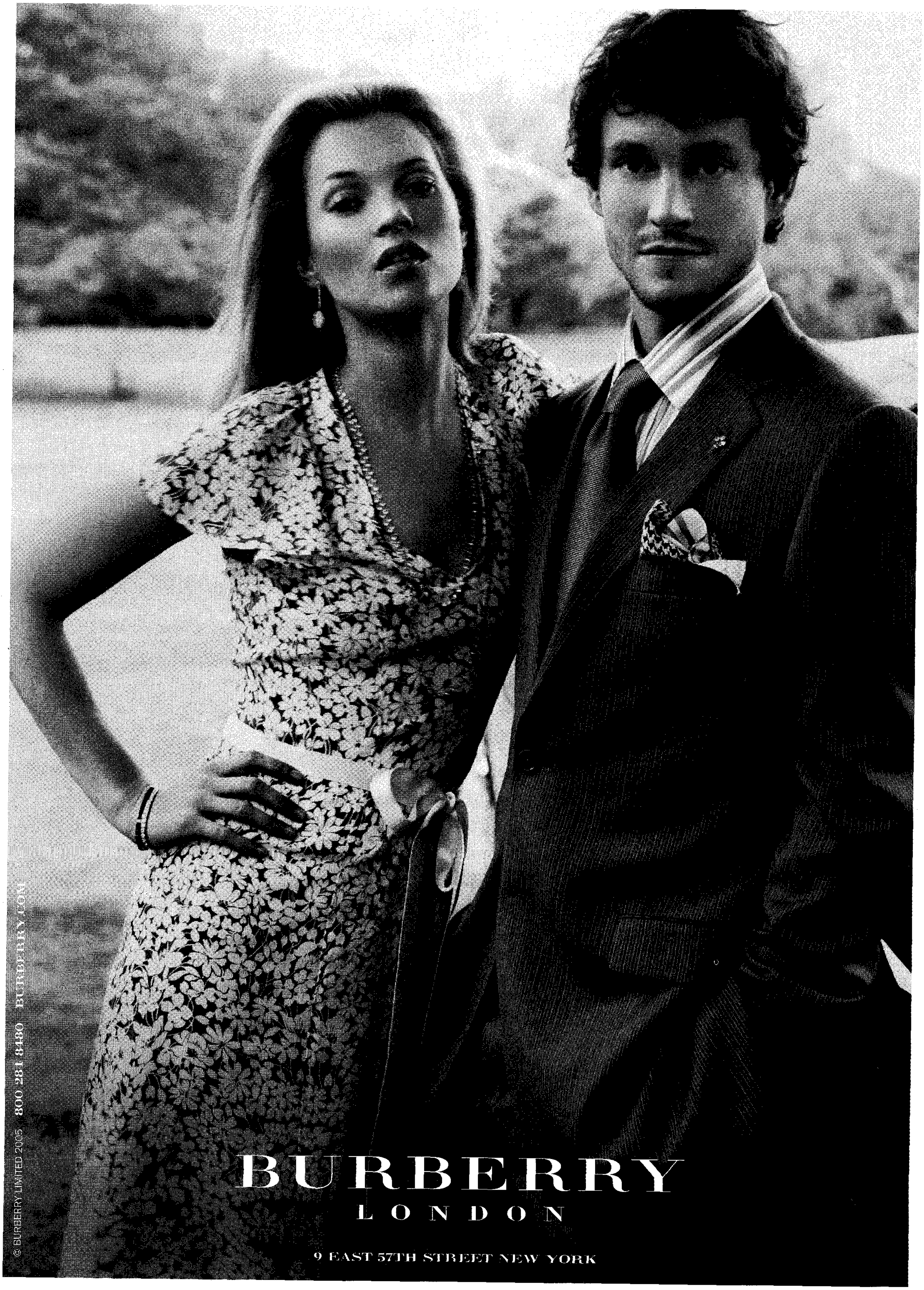
Calvin Trillin ("Lost Son," p. 64) has been writing for the magazine since 1963. His latest book is "Obliviously On He Sails: The Bush Administration in Rhyme."

Eliza Griswold (Poem, p. 93) is a writer who is based in New York City. She reported on Waziristan for the magazine last year.

Mark Singer (The Talk of the Town, p. 61) is the author of five books, including "Character Studies: Encounters with the Curiously Obsessed," which comes out in July.



"Oh, thin—and how are you?"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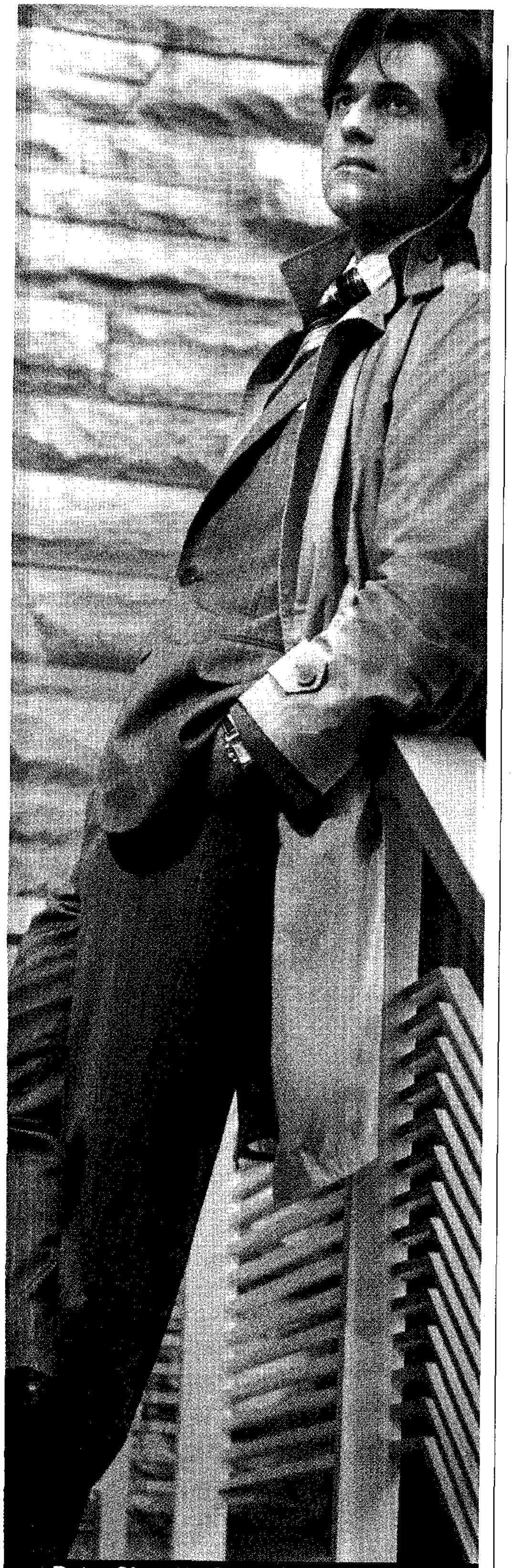

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Anne Enright (Fiction, p. 102) has published three novels: "What Are You Like?," "The Wig My Father Wore," and "The Pleasure of Eliza Lynch."

John Updike (Books, p. 138) is a regular contributor of fiction, poetry, and criticism. His latest novel is "Villages."

Chandler Burr ("The Scent of the Nile," p. 78) is the author of "The Emperor of Scent: A Story of Perfume, Obsession, and the Last Mystery of the Senses."

John Seabrook ("Hands and Eyes," p. 90) has published two books: "Deeper" and "Nobrow: The Culture of Marketing—The Marketing of Culture."

Stanley Moss (Poem, p. 108) is the author of six poetry collections, including "A History of Color" and the forthcoming "Songs of Imperfections."

Maira Kalman (Cover) has published thirteen children's books, including "What Pete Ate from A-Z" and "Fireboat: Heroic Adventures of the John J. Harvey."

A. R. Ammons (Poem, p. 124), who died in 2001, has a posthumous collection of poems, "Bosh and Flapdoodle," coming out this month.

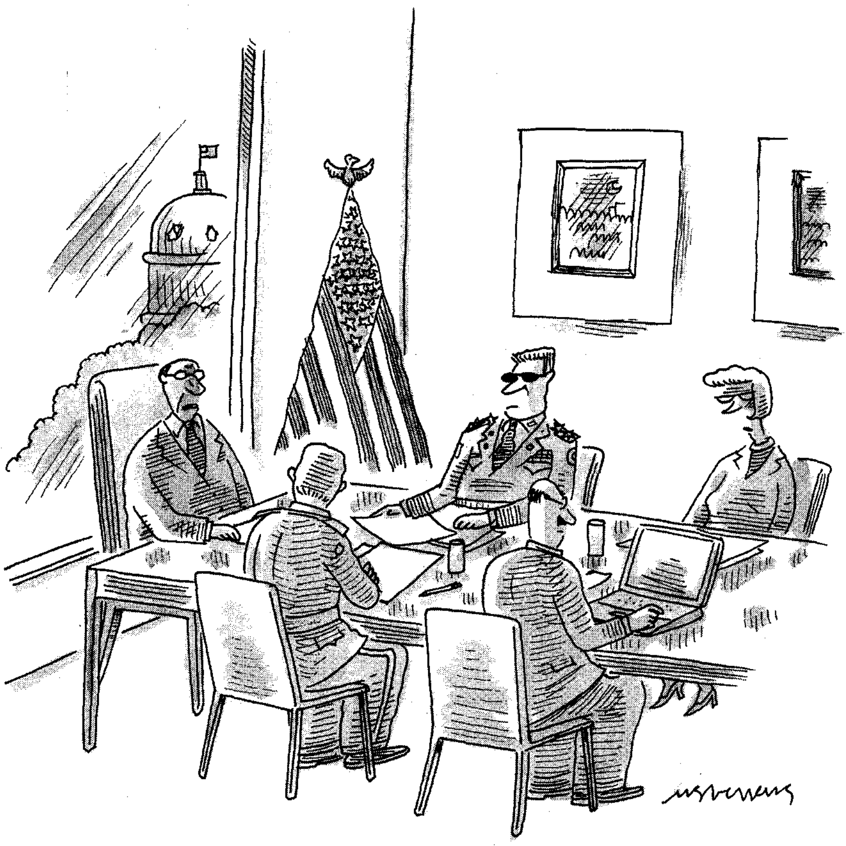
Adam Kirsch (Books, p. 132), the book critic of the New York *Sun*, will publish "The Wounded Surgeon: Confession and Transformation in Six American Poets" next month.

John Lahr (The Theatre, p. 141) is the magazine's senior theatre critic. A collection of his *New Yorker* profiles of show people, "Honky-Tonk Parade," will be published later this year.

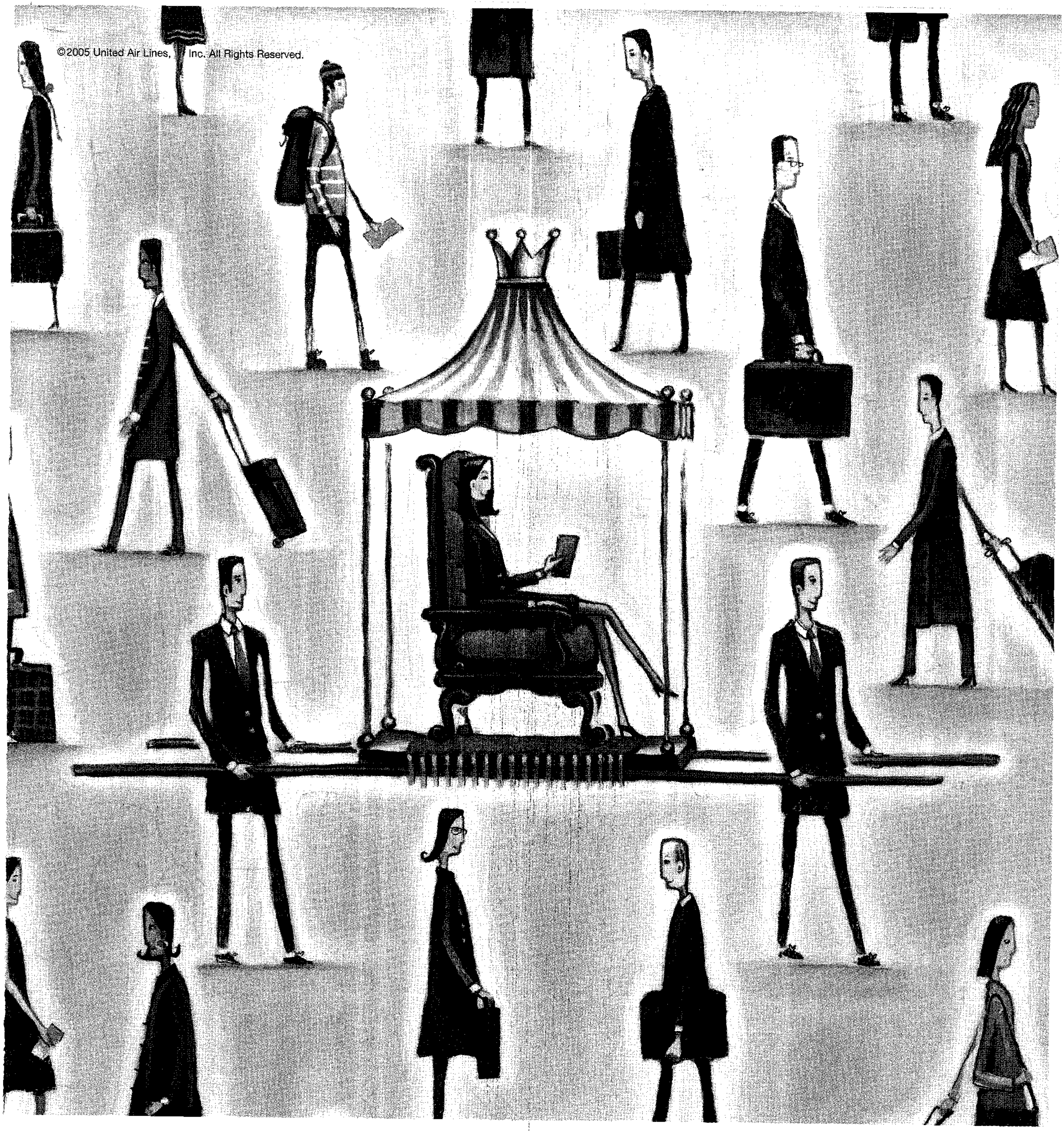
Nancy Franklin (On Television, p. 143) writes a regular column on television.

Anthony Lane (The Current Cinema, p. 145) is the author of "Nobody's Perfect: Writings from *The New Yorker*," which is available in paperback.

Paul Rudnick (The Back Page, p. 148) is a novelist and playwright. His most recent play, "Pride and Joy," was part of the Tribeca Theatre Festival. ♦



"Perhaps we should take a fresh look at the methods of the much maligned Spanish Inquisition."



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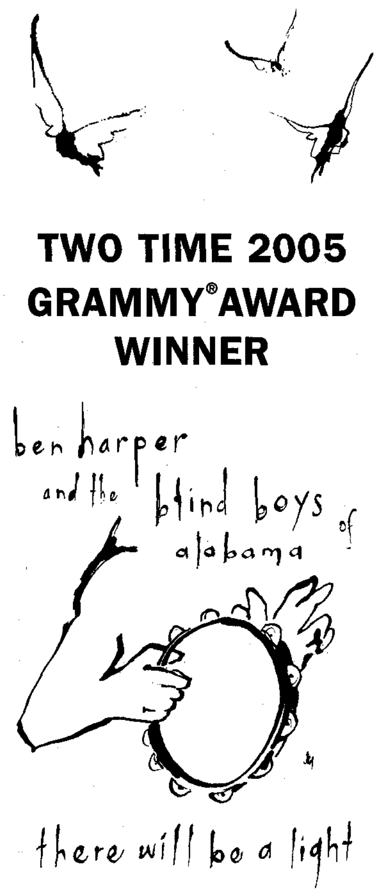
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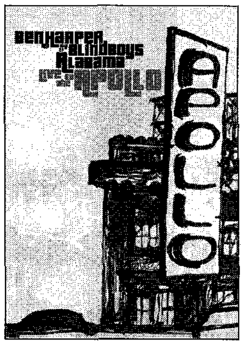

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WITHSTANDING TORTURE

Jane Mayer observes that "scientific research on the efficacy of torture and rough interrogation is limited," because of the inherent ethical problems in obtaining data ("Outsourcing Torture," February 14th & 21st). Nonetheless, there is an extensive body of research on false confessions, including work by Gisli Gudjonsson, a forensic psychologist at King's College, London, and Saul Kassin, a professor of psychology at Williams College. They have examined police-interrogation techniques, and their work demonstrates that highly coercive interrogations lead to increased numbers of false confessions. Dr. Gudjonsson also created a "suggestibility scale" to identify individuals who are more likely to make false confessions. According to a U.S. Army interrogator I spoke to who had recently served in Afghanistan, the problem of false confession was not covered during his otherwise extensive training. Mayer's article exposes just how far officials will go to interrogate suspects like Ibn al-Sheikh al-Libi; it is a shame that they do not go to equivalent lengths to verify the accuracy of the intelligence they obtain.
Anneliese Simmons
School of Public Policy
University of Maryland
College Park, Md.

I was John C. Yoo's history tutor when he was an undergraduate at Harvard. He was a model student, receiving highest honors. Since then, his skills have slipped, judging by the egregious historical analogies he uses to defend the Bush Administration's policy of outsourcing torture. Yoo claims, "Historically, there were people so bad"—he cites pirates and slave traders—"that they were not given protection of the laws. There were no specific provisions for their trial, or imprisonment." This is not borne out by perhaps the most famous piracy case on record. In 1699, Captain William Kidd, having plundered shipping in the Indian and South Atlantic Oceans, was captured in Boston. The law-revering Massachusetts Puritans awaited instructions from London, which ordered Kidd's rendition, not to secret holding pens and arbitrary torture but to hearings before the House of Commons and trial before an Admiralty Court in the Old Bailey. Everyone involved knew what the law of piracy was, and what a guilty verdict meant. (Indeed, ordinary sailors of the time knew this legal territory, and would engage in shipboard debates about whether or not they should cross the line.) Kidd was convicted and sentenced to death, and his body was left hanging above the Thames, as a warning to others not to follow his path. It was brutal punishment for a brutal crime, but it was conducted under very specific legal provisions.
Mark Peterson
Associate Professor of History
University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa

BLAMING THE MEDIA

Nicholas Lemann shows that the mainstream media is being criticized simultaneously by the right and the left ("Fear and Favor," February 14th & 21st). But the media has only itself to blame. It is ironic that individual journalists and media outlets should be criticized for a liberal or conservative bias, when in fact the deeper problem is a wholesale abandonment of critical analysis. There is a general tendency to indulge in the continual iteration of partisan opinions, on the basis that, as long as equal time is given to both sides, there is no bias. Media outlets would perform a far more worthy service if they worked to expose the half-truths and outright distortions of fact that compromise both liberal and conservative positions.
Josh Miner
Oakland, Calif.

•

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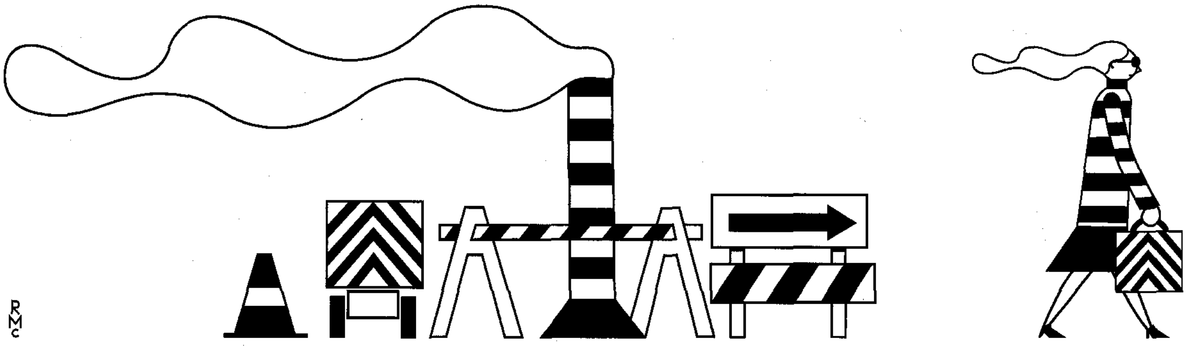

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For expanded events listings, please visit www.newyorker.com/goingson.

THIS WEEK IN GOOD HANS

For those who got their introduction to the world of Hans Christian Andersen via Danny Kaye, Leon Botstein's bicentennial concert with the American Symphony Orchestra offers a chance to continue the arm's-length relationship, but in a darker key. Alexander Zemlinsky's treatment of "The Mermaid" turns it into an overheated tone poem of sexual obsession; Karel Husa's "The Steadfast Tin Soldier" is written from the perspective of an enemy of Czech Communism; and Paul von Klenau's Overture to "Little Ida's Flowers" is the product of a Dane loyal to the Nazis. Stravinsky's "The Song of the Nightingale," a colorful suite from his opera-ballet "Le Rossignol," anchors the program. (Avery Fisher Hall, March 11; see Classical Music.)

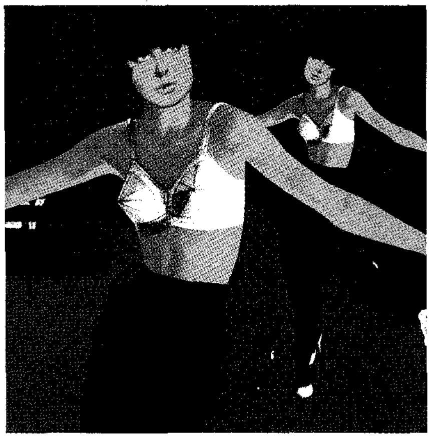
BACK TO BASQUIAT

Jean-Michel Basquiat is being celebrated in his home borough with the most comprehensive survey of his work since the 1992-93 show at the Whitney. "Basquiat" presents some ninety works that cover the artist's career as a one-man melting pot—a repository of academic high-mindedness and guttersnipery, European languages and graffiti. It's a shame he couldn't be here to see it. (Brooklyn Museum, opens March 11; see Art.)

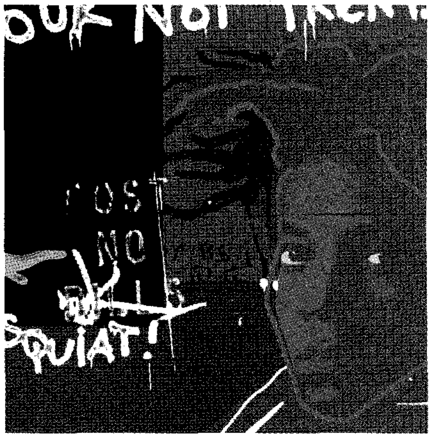
NO WORDS

The British wunderkind Matthew Bourne (who choreographed the hit musical "Mary Poppins," now playing in London, and won a Tony for his all-male "Swan Lake") subverts the subversive in "Play Without Words," a multilayered theatrical production inspired by Joseph Losey's 1963 film "The Servant," which has a screenplay by Harold Pinter. In Bourne's Olivier-winning play—which has an original jazz score by Terry Davies—a sly, brooding butler and his smug employer play sadistic power games, using the butler's fiancée as a pawn. (BAM, opens March 15; see Theatre.)

Music inspired by Hans Christian Andersen, performed at Lincoln Center.

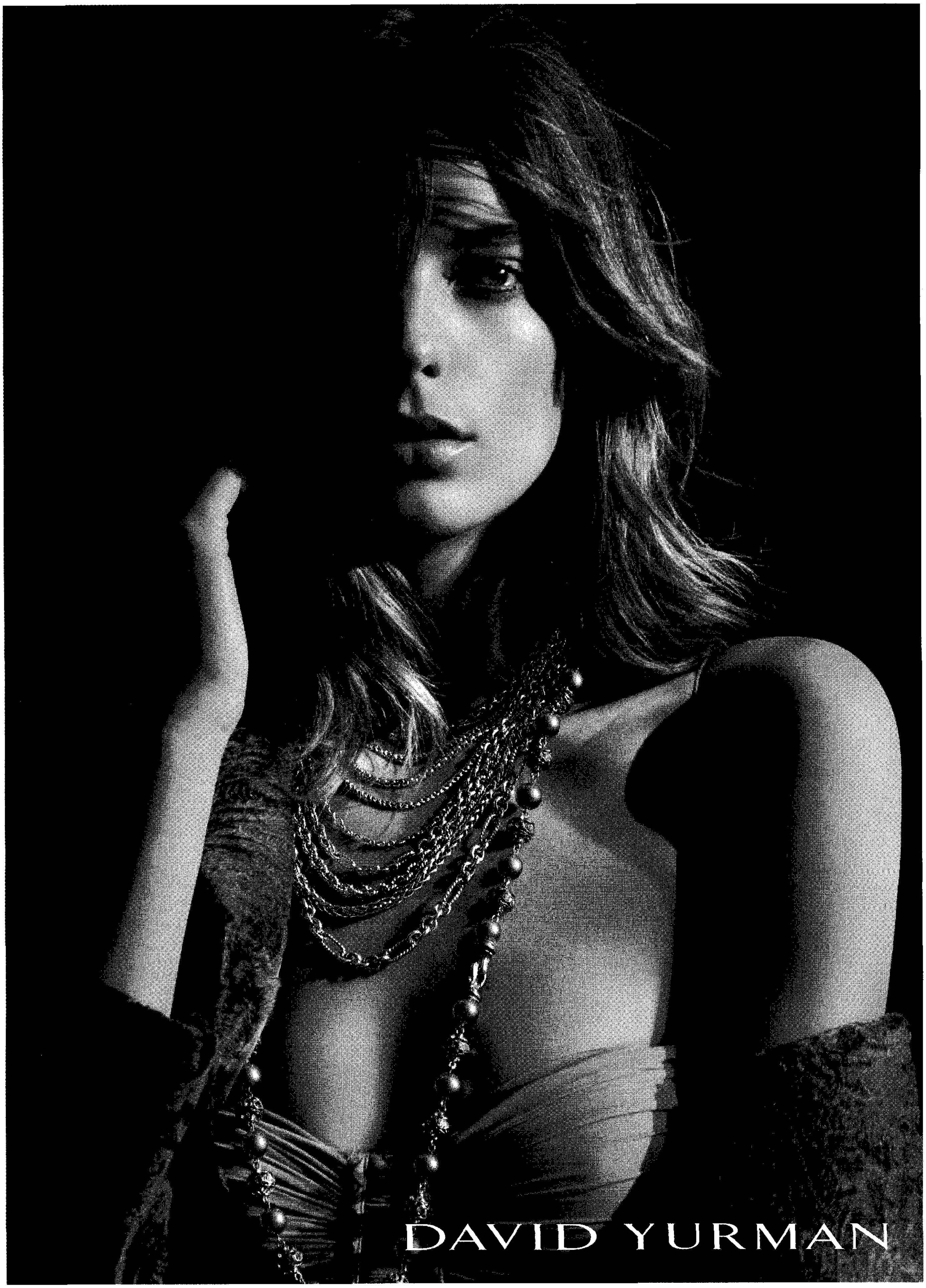


Matthew Bourne's "Play Without Words," at the Brooklyn Academy of Music.



JOHN RITTER

A Jean-Michel Basquiat retrospective, at the Brooklyn Museum.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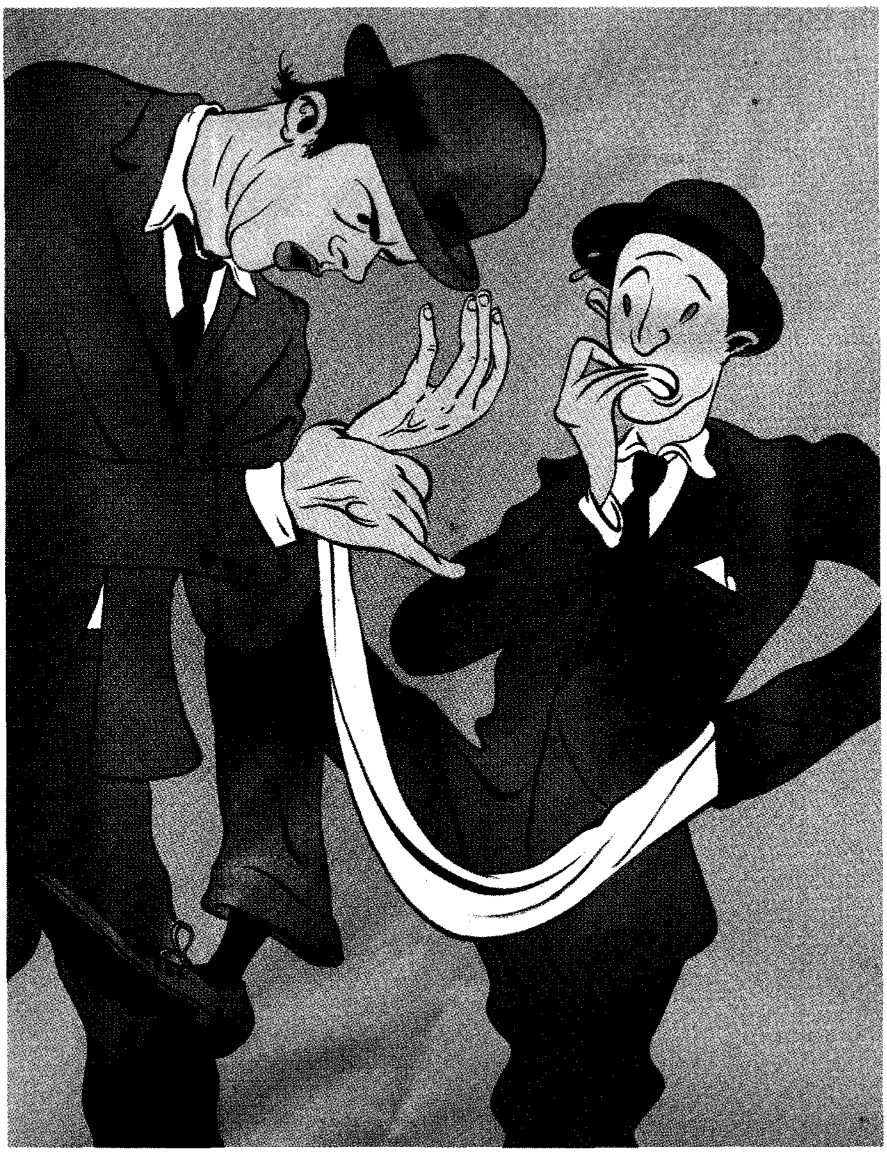

Geoff Sobelle and Trey Lyford star in "All Wear Bowlers," now playing at HERE.

ZOHAR LAZAR

ALL SHOOK UP
The spirit of Elvis lives on in a new musical comedy set to his songs, with a book by Joe DiPietro, musical direction and arrangements by Stephen Oremus, and choreography by Ken Roberson. Directed by Christopher Ashley. In previews. (Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-307-4100.)

DESSA ROSE
Sherley Anne Williams's novel about an antebellum-era friendship between a runaway slave (LaChanze) and an abandoned wife (Rachel York) has become a musical, with book and lyrics by Lynn Ahrens and music by Stephen Flaherty. Choreographed and directed by Graciela Daniele. In previews. (Mitzi Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.)

THE FOREVER WALTZ
A retelling of the Orpheus and Eurydice myth by Glyn Maxwell—the poet, playwright, and current poetry editor of *The New Republic*—is presented by the Workshop Theatre Company. Directed by Elysa Marden. Previews begin March 10. Opens March 12 at 8. (312 W. 36th St. 212-695-4173.)

THE GLASS MENAGERIE
Jessica Lange and Christian Slater star in a revival of Tennessee Williams's 1945 drama. Directed by David Leveaux. In previews. (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

GORILLA MAN
In a new rock musical by Kyle Jarrow ("President Harding Is a Rock Star," "A Very Merry Unauthorized Children's Scientology Pageant") a teen-age boy discovers the beastly secret of his parentage. Directed by Habib Azar. With Jarrow on piano. March 10-27. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-477-5288.)

HOT 'N' THROBBING
Rebecca Wisocky stars in the final production of the Signature Theatre Company's Paula Vogel season, a new drama about a woman who writes erotic screenplays to support her children while trying to keep her estranged husband at bay. Directed by Les Waters. In previews. (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

LAZER VAUDEVILLE
Lasers, magic, screwball comedy, juggling, and high-tech effects come together in a show directed by Carter Brown and choreographed by Cindy Marvell. Opens March 9 at 8. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

MOONLIGHT AND MAGNOLIAS
A new play by Ron Hutchinson shows the flurry behind the scenes in Hollywood in 1939, as David O. Selznick (Douglas Sills), the director Victor Fleming (David Rasche), and the screenwriter Ben Hecht (Matthew Arkin) struggle to write the screenplay for "Gone with the Wind." With Margo Skinner as Selznick's secretary. Directed by Lynne Meadow, with sets by Santo Loquasto and costumes by Jane Greenwood. In previews. (Manhattan Theatre Club, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

ORSON'S SHADOW
Laurence Olivier, Joan Plowright, and Vivien Leigh figure in a new play by Austin Pendleton that imagines the complicated life of the film director Orson Welles in 1960, when, at the suggestion of an incendiary friend, the critic Kenneth Tynan, he took over a London production of Ionesco's "Rhinoceros." Directed by David Cromer. In previews. Opens March 13 at 5. (Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200.)

PLAY WITHOUT WORDS
Matthew Bourne's play with music, inspired by the 1963 film "The Servant," comes to BAM (see This Week). Opens March 15 at 7. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St. 718-636-4100.)

PULLMAN, WA
A play about disaffected, unappealing youths, written and directed by the playwright Young Jean Lee, stars Iver Findlay, Pete Simpson, and Tory Vazquez. Opens March 10 at 7. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-477-5288.)

SPAMALOT
The Monty Python musical stars David Hyde Pierce, Tim Curry, and Hank Azaria. With a book by Eric Idle and music and lyrics by Idle and John Du Prez. Directed by Mike Nichols. In previews. (Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

STEEL MAGNOLIAS
Delta Burke, Christine Ebersole, and Frances Sternhagen lead the cast in a revival of Robert Harling's play about the relationships between a close-knit group of women in a small Southern town. Directed by Jason Moore. Previews begin March 15. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

THIS IS HOW IT GOES
An interracial love triangle is the subject of a new play by Neil LaBute, starring Marisa Tomei, Ben Stiller, and Jeffrey Wright. Directed by George C. Wolfe. Previews begin March 10. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200.)

WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF?
Edward Albee's sparring George and Martha are played by Bill Irwin and Kathleen Turner in a revival of Albee's 1962 drama. Previews begin March 12. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

WOMAN BEFORE A GLASS
Mercedes Ruehl stars in a new play by Lanie Robertson, set in Venice in the sixties, about the life and loves of the art patron and tastemaker Peggy Guggenheim. Directed by Casey Childs. Two previews on March 9. Opens March 10 at 7. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 212-239-6200.)

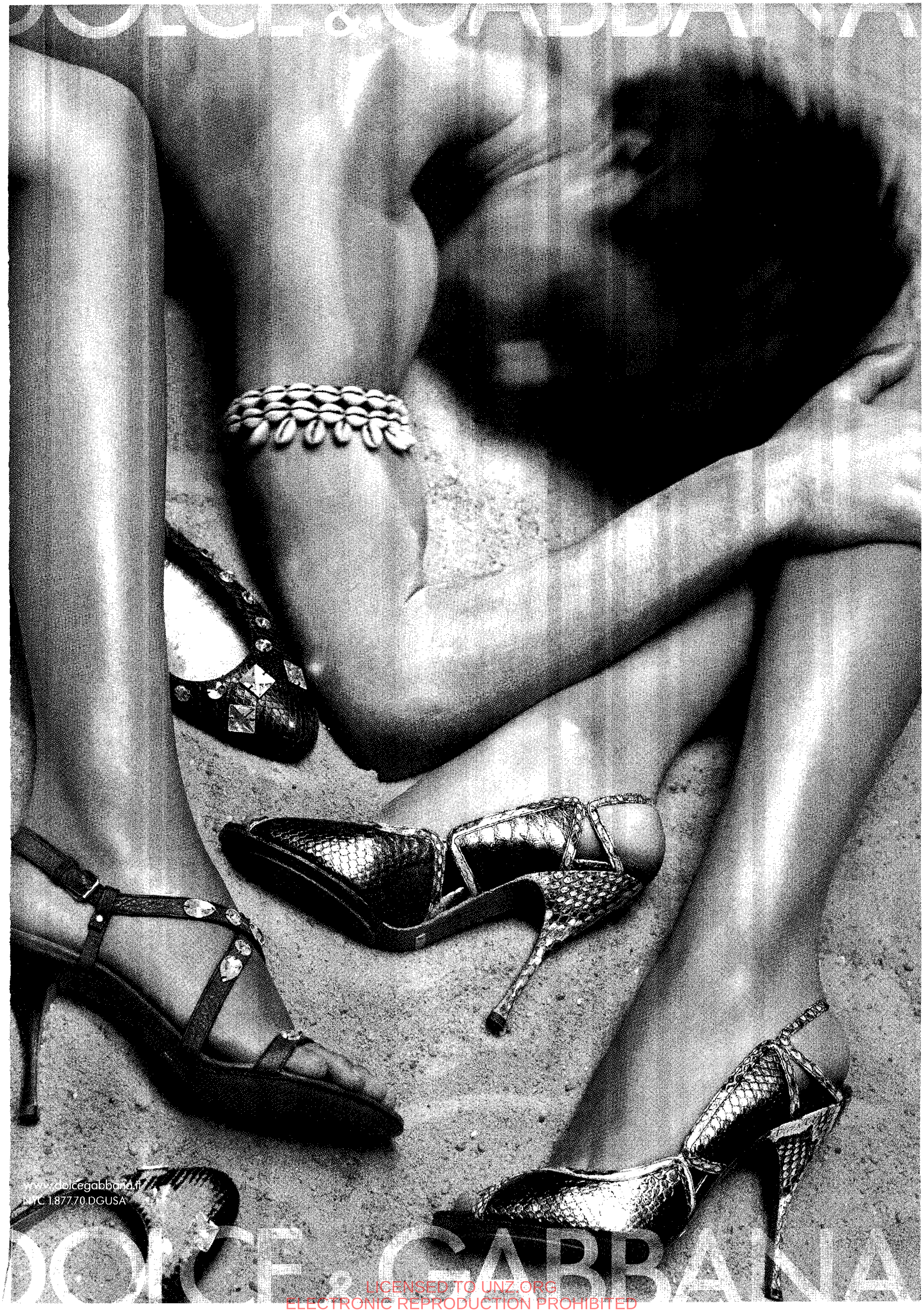
OPENED RECENTLY

AFTER ASHLEY
A troubled teen named Justin (Kieran Culkin) becomes a national celebrity in a new play by Gina Gionfriddo. Anna Paquin co-stars as a starstruck girl who hits on Justin in a bar, drawn by his tragic past. Directed by Terry Kinney. (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 212-353-0303.)

ALL WEAR BOWLERS
Geoff Sobelle, of Pig Iron Theatre Company, and Trey Lyford, of the Civilians, join forces in this existential physical comedy about silent-film clowns who fall out of the screen and find themselves stuck in a live clown act. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-868-4444.)

ALTAR BOYZ
A musical comedy about a Christian boy band has lyrics like "Girl, you make me wanna wait" and "Jesus called me on my cell phone." Conceived by Marc Kessler and Ken Davenport, with a score by Gary Adler and Michael Patrick Walker and a book by Kevin Del Aguila. Directed by Stafford Arima. (Dodger Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE BINDLESTIFF FAMILY CIRKUS
In its new show, "From Gutter to Glitter," the sword-swallowing neo-vaudevillian troupe whit-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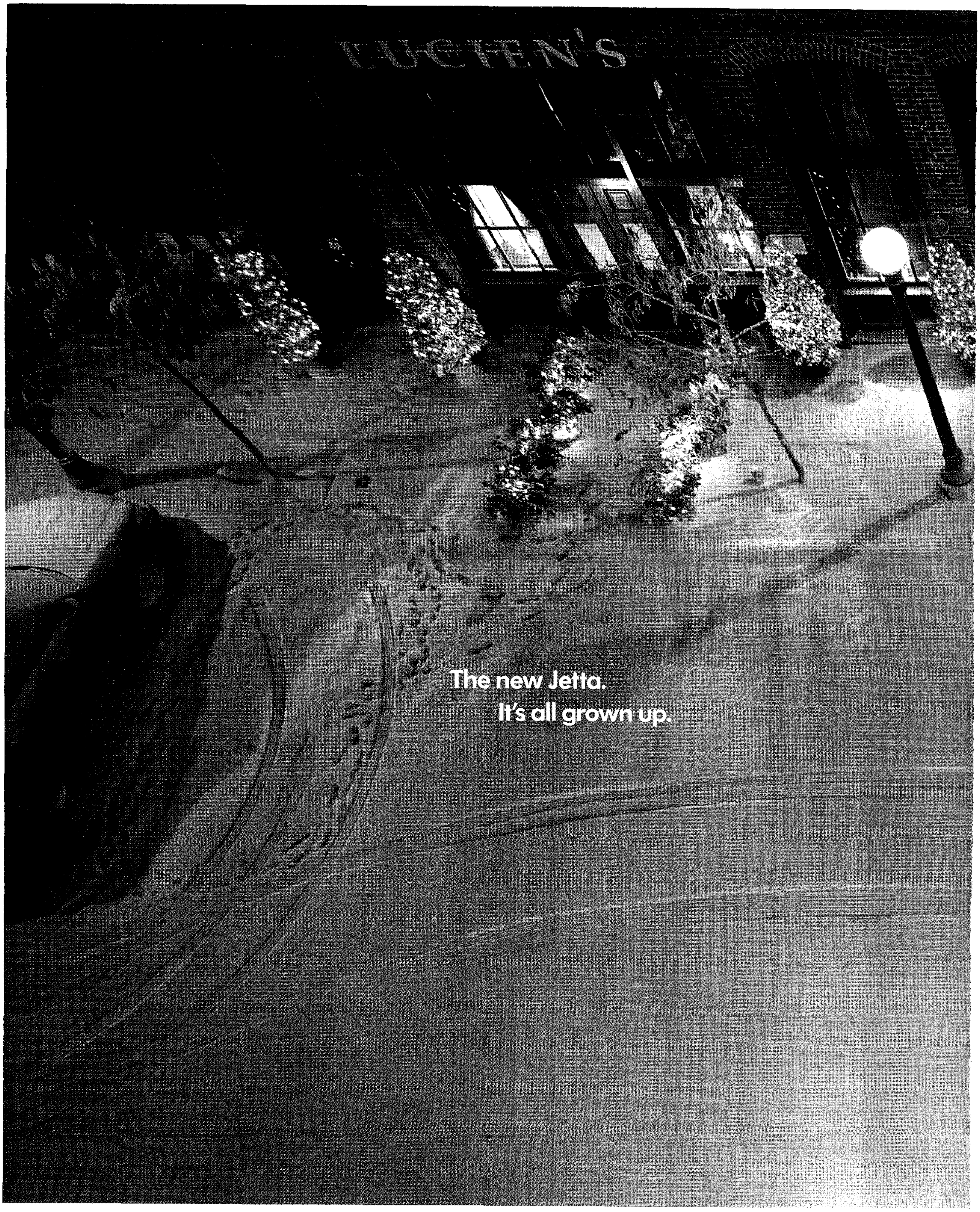
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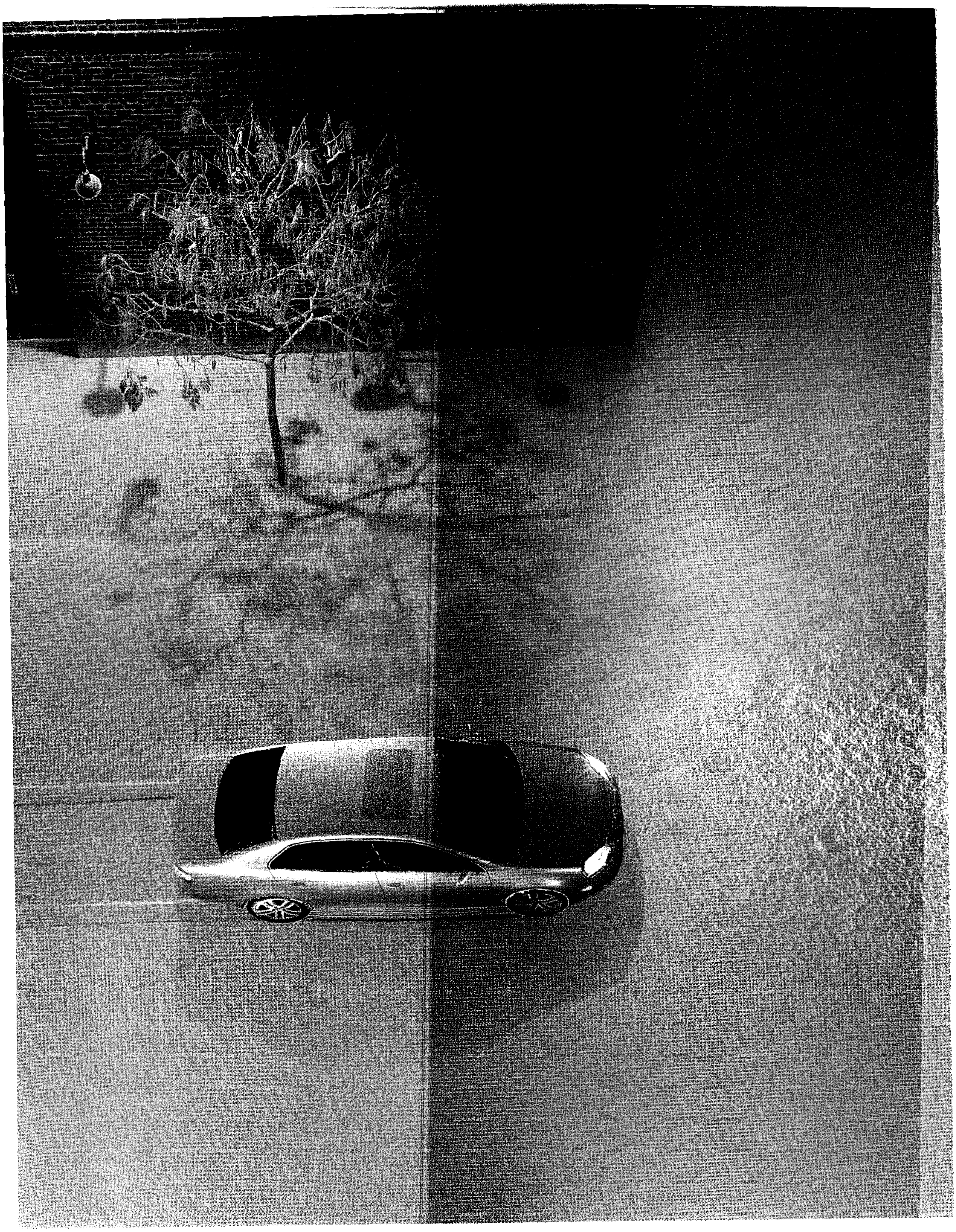

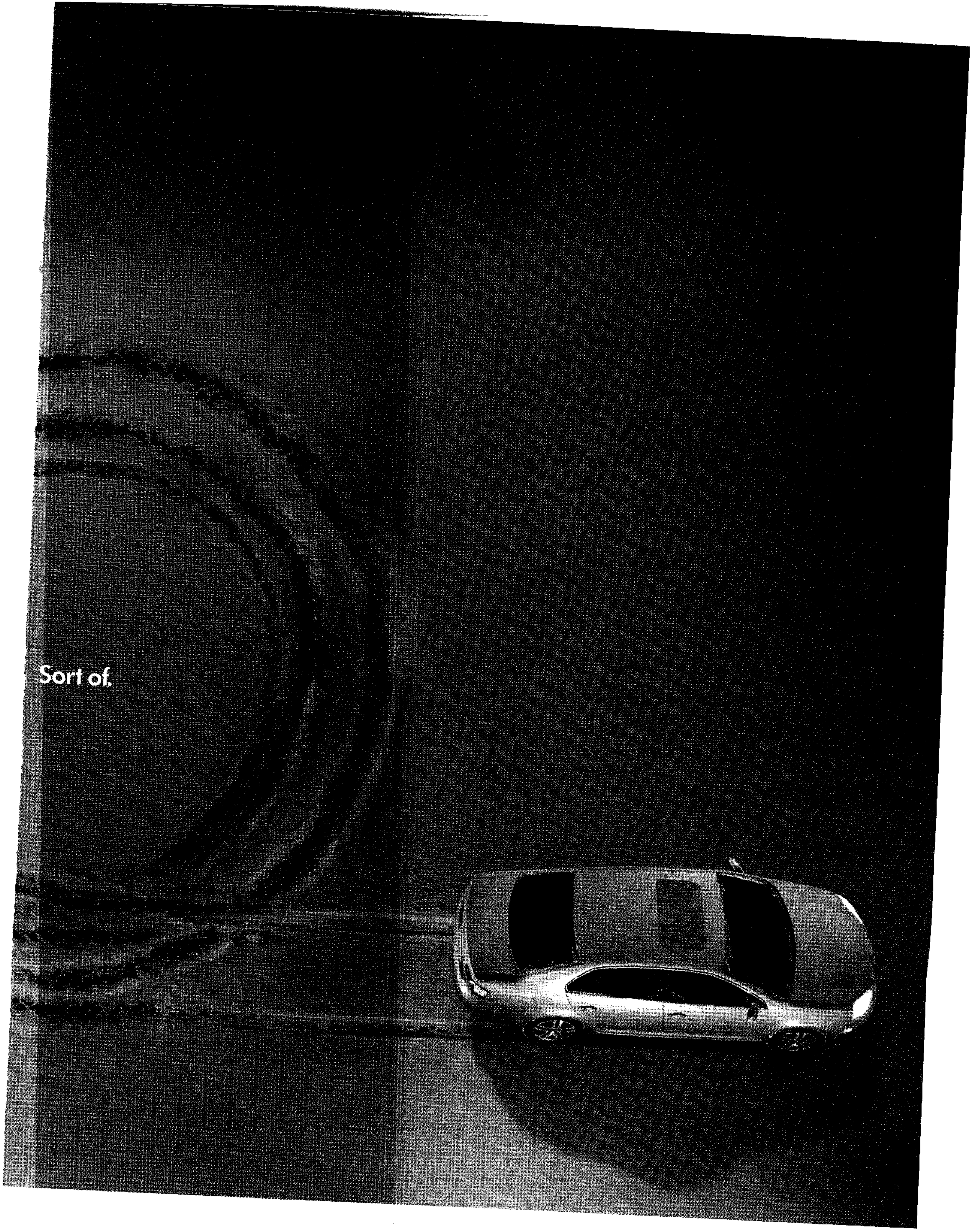

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tles the once extensive Bindlestiff entourage down to a core family: the founding couple Keith Nelson and Stephanie Monseu, joined by the musical mischief-makers Peter Bufano and Kathe Hostetter. Their idea of a night in isn't a cozy game of Scrabble: they crack whips, walk on glass, swing from trapezes, sing torch songs, and perform a gorgeous fire-eating duet—things you might not want to try at home. (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave., at 10th St. 212-352-0255.)

BROOKLYN BOY

In Donald Margulies's new play, Eric (Adam Arkin), a young literary lion, interrupts his book tour to visit his dying father, Manny (the baleful Allan Miller), in the cancer ward of a Brooklyn hospital. Manny isn't big on reading; he is, however, big on belittling. Learning that his son's book is No. 11 on the *Times* best-seller list, Manny says, "You mean there *is* an eleven? I thought it only went to ten." Margulies's portrait of envy's spoiling rage is served up with large dollops of humor and a pinch of reparation. Directed by Daniel Sullivan. (Reviewed in our issue of 2/14 & 21/05.) (Biltmore, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE CONTROVERSY OF VALLADOLID

A new work by the French playwright Jean-Claude Carrière explores the debate in the Catholic Church in the sixteenth century on the question of whether the indigenous peoples of the Americas were human. Translated by Richard Nelson. Directed by David Jones. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200. Through March 20.)

DIRTY ROTTEN SCOUNDRELS

John Lithgow, Norbert Leo Butz, and Sherie Rene Scott star in a musical based on the Steve Martin and Michael Caine film about con men. Created by David Yazbek (music and lyrics), Jeffrey Lane (book), and Jerry Mitchell (choreography). Directed by Jack O'Brien. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE DRAWER BOY

An actor disrupts the quiet life of two neighboring bachelor farmers in a comedy by Michael Healey. Directed by Anna D. Shapiro. (Paper Mill Playhouse, Brookside Drive, Millburn, N.J. 973-376-4343.)

ENDGAME

Tony Roberts, Alvin Epstein, Adam Heller, and Kathryn Grody star in an Irish Repertory Theatre production of Samuel Beckett's deadpan black comedy about the end of everything. Directed by Charlotte Moore. (132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737.)

GHETTO SUPERSTAR (THE MAN THAT I AM)

Billy Porter's musical memoir describes his life as a gay black man and a performer. Directed by Brad Rouse. (Joe's Pub, 425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200.)

HOUSE/LIGHTS

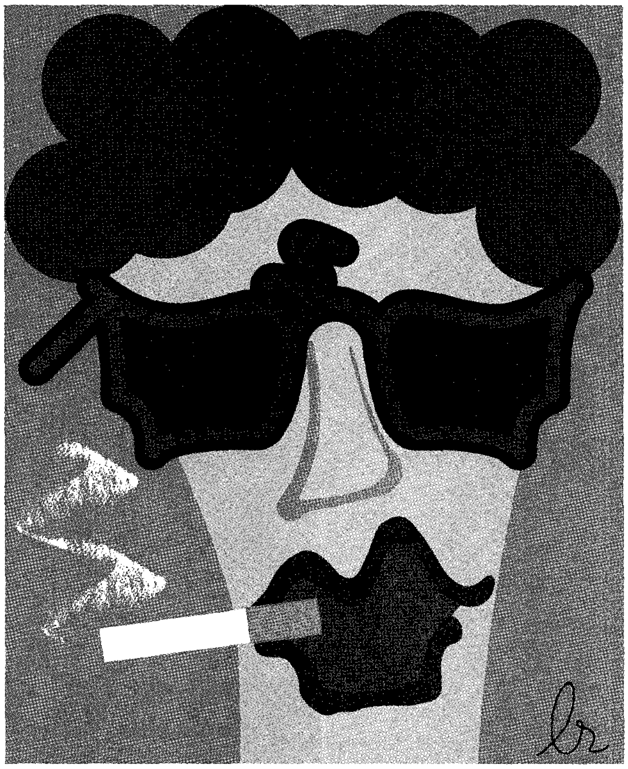
Kate Valk's tour-de-force performance is the engine of the Wooster Group's revival of its acclaimed 1999 production—which blends Gertrude Stein's 1938 "Dr. Faustus Lights the Lights" with Joseph Mawra's dominatrixy B-movie, "Olga's House of Shame." Valk's riveting face, eerily lit by enormous overhead light bulbs—for which her character has supposedly sold her soul—is simulcast on video monitors that dot the stage; her voice is fractured by synthesizers. In the midst of this technical high-wire act, Valk nails a half-dozen genres, from second-rate melodrama and bizarro Western to hand puppetry. Directed by Elizabeth LeCompte. (St. Ann's Warehouse, 38 Water St., Brooklyn. 718-254-8779.)

HURLYBURLY

Written in 1984 and well revived by the New Group's deft, high-octane cast (which includes Ethan Hawke and Bobby Cannavale), David Rabe's play is a wild, daring, mysterious brainstorm that channels the horror and hilarity of the chaotic household of two debauched TV casting directors in the Hollywood Hills. Directed by Scott Elliott. (2/14 & 21/05) (Theatre Row, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

I HAVE BEEN HERE BEFORE

J. B. Priestley's taut thriller from 1937 is built on the notion of eternal recurrence. At Whitsuntide, four travellers arrive at a lonely Yorkshire inn: an exiled German intellectual (Dominic Cuskern), an anxious young wife (Rachel Botchan) who no longer loves her husband (Dan Daily), and a handsome schoolmaster (Sean McNall) who falls for the lonely wife. But as the German shares his premonitions of impending doom, the travellers gradually discover that a fateful web connects them. Skillfully directed by Gus Kaikkonen. (Pearl, 80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802.)



Mercedes Ruehl stars in "Woman Before a Glass," a play about Peggy Guggenheim, opening at the Promenade on March 10.

JABU

A musical comedy written, composed, and directed by Elizabeth Swados blends the French absurdist classic "Ubu Roi" with stories of the wild youth of its author, Alfred Jarry. Performed at the Flea Theatre, by the Bats, its resident acting company. (41 White St. 212-352-3101.)

THE LAST DAYS OF JUDAS ISCARIOT

A new drama by Stephen Adly Guirgis ("Our Lady of 121st Street," "Jesus Hopped the A Train"), set in a quasi-modern courtroom in Purgatory, wrestles with the question of divine justice. Directed by Philip Seymour Hoffman. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200.)

MC REELE

Punditry is the real subject of a topical new drama by Stephen Belber ("Tape"), about a handsome convict, Darius (Anthony Mackie), who enlists a sympathetic reporter (Michael O'Keefe) and his girlfriend, a television-talk-show host (Jodi Long), to help get his death sentence lifted. Not only do they succeed, they launch his political career. The drama, though savvy, feels contrived, and Mackie conveys Darius's cleverness and gift for spin but doesn't pull off the seductive ambiguity that the role requires. A Roundabout Theatre Company production. Directed by Doug Hughes ("Doubt"). (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

THE MUSICAL OF MUSICALS: THE MUSICAL!

An exuberant sendup of the genre, written by Eric Rockwell and Joanne Bogart, with music by Rockwell and lyrics by Bogart. Directed by Pamela Hunt. (Dodger Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE NAME OF THIS PLAY IS TALKING HEADS

Andy Goldberg ("The Bomb-itty of Errors") directs a new play by the pop satirist Marc Spitz, which sends up the rock-punditry business. (Under St. Marks, 94 St. Marks Pl., between First Ave. and Ave. A. 212-868-4444. Through March 26.)

ON SECOND AVENUE

Mike Burstyn stars in the Folksbiene Yiddish Theatre revival of Moishe Rosenfeld and Zalmen Mlotek's musical revue about the history of the Yiddish theatre. Mostly in English, with some songs sung in Yiddish (with English supertitles). (Jewish Community Center, 334 Amsterdam Ave. 800-943-3475.)

ON THE MOUNTAIN

Christopher Shinn's well-plotted new drama has surprising nuance and sudden surges of emotion. A tense but sexy single mother (Amy Ryan), raising a gifted, troubled teen-age daughter (Alison Pill), begins a relationship with a laid-back younger guy (Ebon Moss-Bachrach), who may or may not love her but definitely worships her former lover, a Seattle rock legend who committed suicide. The play offers several outstanding monologues, some tender, some searing, and one—a description of a short story by the daughter—unforgettable. The dialogues aren't as effective, in part because the characters guard their privacy so fiercely that their capacity for genuine interaction is limited; they are people who want to share but don't know how. Directed by Jo Bonney. (Playwrights Horizons Mainstage, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

PENTECOST

In a polyglot play by David Edgar, set in an ancient chapel in Eastern Europe (a lovely and convincing set by Markas Henry), a curator (Oksana Lada) enlists an English expert (Marc Aden Gray) to check the authenticity of a newly unearthed fresco, reminiscent of Giotto, that may break new art-historic ground. The expert is smitten by the curator, as well as the art work, but when another expert challenges the fresco's provenance tempers flare, and tension mounts when the chapel is taken over by refugees. Edgar's script has much fine writing but ultimately overreaches. With a large cast, admirably directed by Seth Barrish. The inaugural production of the Barrow Group Arts Center. (312 W. 36th St. 212-868-4444.)

PICON PIE

The long-running Off-Broadway celebration of the life and loves of the Yiddish theatre star Molly Picon has reopened at the Lambs Theatre and stars June Gable. (130 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

ROMANCE

The Atlantic Theatre Company presents a new play by David Mamet (the company's co-founder), a courtroom comedy set in the present day. With Larry Bryggman and Bob Balaban. Directed by Neil Pepe. (Reviewed in this issue.) (336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.)

SHOCKHEADED PETER

A nightmarish and beautiful production. Actors in Victorian dress act out children's cautionary tales, stage-managed by a nervous, hysteric m.c. (the sinister, corroded Julian Bleach) with the help of the spooky Tiger Lillies, who accompany (and sometimes narrate) the proceedings with eerie, plangent music. (Little Shubert, 422 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

THOM PAIN (BASED ON NOTHING)

James Urbaniak gives a bravura performance as the title character in this delicately scripted monologue

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by Will Eno, about a man troubled by thought or, rather, by the thoughts that become particularly troubling once you've suffered a breakup, which Thom Pain has. No amount of intellectualizing can distract him from the memory of his beloved's legs, face, and eyes. Thom's language breaks down as he recalls the essentially nonverbal memory of flesh on flesh. Ably directed by Hal Brooks. (2/28/05) (DR2, 103 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.)

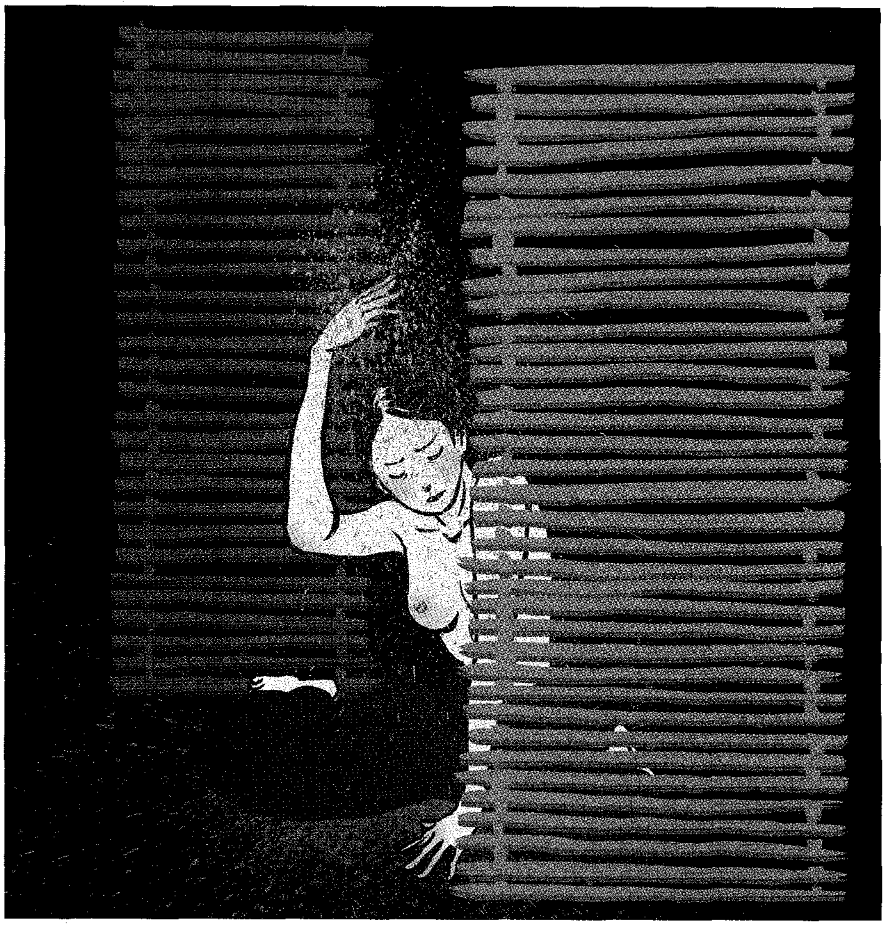
THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE
The wracking tension of spelling-bee competition is turned into rollicking ironic fun in this new musical by William Finn ("Falsettos") and Rachel Sheinkin, in which each speller hams up the role of a different grade-school stereotype. There's the skinny, lisping overachiever Logainne Schwartzandgrubenierre (Sarah Saltzberg), who has two gay dads and blond hair so tightly braided that if you yanked a plait her brains might pop out; the goony Leaf Coneybear (Jesse Tyler Ferguson), a non-alpha speller who got bumped into the bee by chance; and the uproarious William Barfee (Dan Fogler), who is self-serious, plump, and rubber-limbed, and spells out each letter of his words with his shoe in a crazed ritual dance. Directed by James Lapine. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

UNCLE VANYA
Russian and American actors perform in a Volga Productions revival of Chekhov's play at 78th Street Theatre Lab, in a new translation by Arnold Shvetsov, who directs. (236 W. 78th St. 212-636-9601. Through March 13th.)

A VERY NAUGHTY GREEK PLAY
A saucy adaptation of Aristophanes' comedy "The Wasps," about a father who works for a hedonistic, power-crazed demagogue and his son's attempts to reawaken his conscience. A production of the Aquila Theatre Company. Translated by Peter Meineck. (Baruch Performing Arts Center, E. 25th St. between Lexington and Third Aves. 212-239-6200.)

ALSO PLAYING

AVENUE Q
Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.
BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 212-307-4747.
BELFAST BLUES
Culture Project, 45 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100.
BLUE MAN GROUP
Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 212-254-4370.
BROOKLYN: THE MUSICAL
Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.
LA CAGE AUX FOLLES
Marquis, Broadway at 46th St. 212-307-4100.
CHICAGO
Ambassador, 215 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.
COOKIN'
Minetta Lane, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 212-420-8000.
DAME EDNA: BACK WITH A VENGEANCE!
Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.
DEMOCRACY
Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St.
EYEWITNESS BLUES
New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200.
FIDDLER ON THE ROOF
Minskoff, 200 W. 45th St. 212-307-4100.
FORBIDDEN BROADWAY
Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.
THE GODS ARE POUNDING MY HEAD!
St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-533-4650.
GOOD VIBRATIONS
Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.
HAIRSPRAY
Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100.
I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 212-239-6200.
JEWTOPIA
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 212-239-6200.
THE LION KING
New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.
LITTLE WOMEN
Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200.
THE LONELY WAY
Mint, 311 W. 43rd St. 212-315-0231.
LONE STAR LOVE
John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.
MAMMA MIA!
Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-563-5544.
MODERN ORTHODOX
Dodger Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200.



"Nomad: The River," a multimedia piece by Yin Mei, at Dance Theatre Workshop.

YUKO SHIMIZU

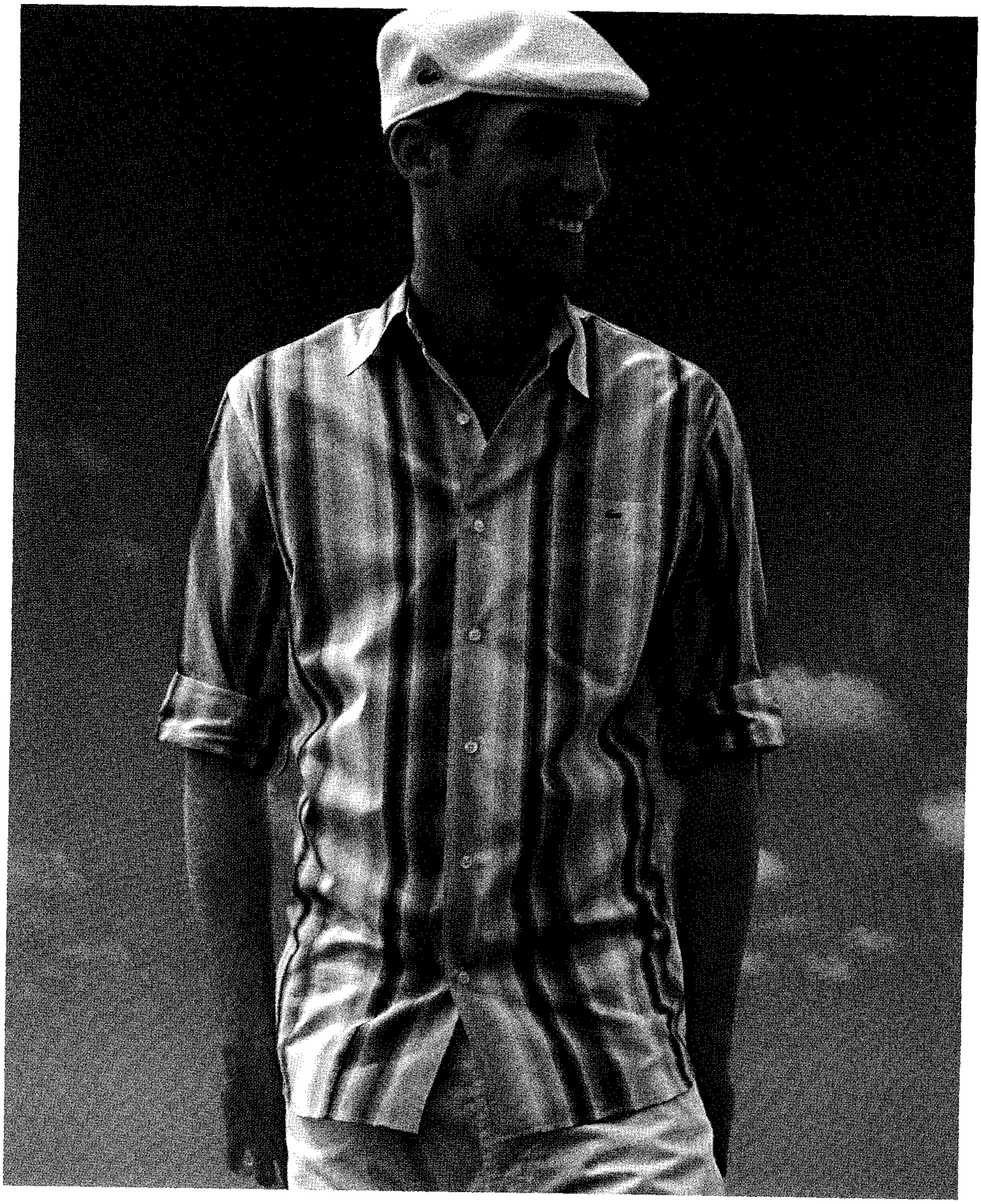
MOVIN' OUT
Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-307-4100.
NINE PARTS OF DESIRE
Manhattan Ensemble Theatre, 55 Mercer St. 212-239-6200.
THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.
THE PRODUCERS
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.
RENT
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 212-921-8000.
700 SUNDAYS
Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.
SHYLOCK
Perry Street Theatre, 31 Perry St. 212-868-4444.
SLAVA'S SNOWSHOW
Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 212-505-0700.
STOMP
Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 212-477-2477.
TWELVE ANGRY MEN
American Airlines, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.
WICKED
Gershwin, 222 W. 51st St. 212-307-4100.

DANCE

PAUL TAYLOR DANCE COMPANY
The troupe's fiftieth-anniversary season at City Center continues. ♦ March 8 at 7: "Musical Offering," "Funny Papers," and "Piazzolla Caldera." ♦ March 9 at 8: "Arden Court," "Big Bertha," and "Syzygy." ♦ March 10 at 8: "Black Tuesday," "Klezmerbluegrass," and "Esplanade." ♦ March 11 at 8: "Musical Offering," "Big Bertha," and "Syzygy." ♦ March 12 at 2: "Aureole," "3 Epitaphs," "Dante Variations," and "Le Sacre du Printemps (The Rehearsal)." ♦ March 12 at 8: "Cloven Kingdom," "Last Look," and "Offenbach Overtures." ♦ March 13 at 3: "Arden Court," "Eventide," and "Piazzolla Caldera." ♦ March 15 at 7: "Company B," "Dante Variations," and "Promethean Fire." (131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. Through March 20.)

RIVERDANCE
The Celtic entertainment juggernaut returns to Radio City Music Hall for a tenth-anniversary engagement, timed to last through Saint Patrick's Day. Over the years, the outsized show and its supercharged step dancing have proved impervious to mockery, racking up near-mythic numbers of performances: eight thousand concerts in thirty countries have been seen by eighteen million people—not counting those who watched the nine million videos that have been sold. (Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 212-247-4777. March 10-11 at 8, March 12 at 2 and 8, March 13 at 1 and 7, and March 15 at 7. Through March 17.)

ASPEN SANTA FE BALLET
The energetic young company, which hops between two mountain ranges out west, returns to the Joyce for the first time since its well-received 2003 New York début. The program includes "Left Unsaid," a new piece by Nicolo Fonte; "Like



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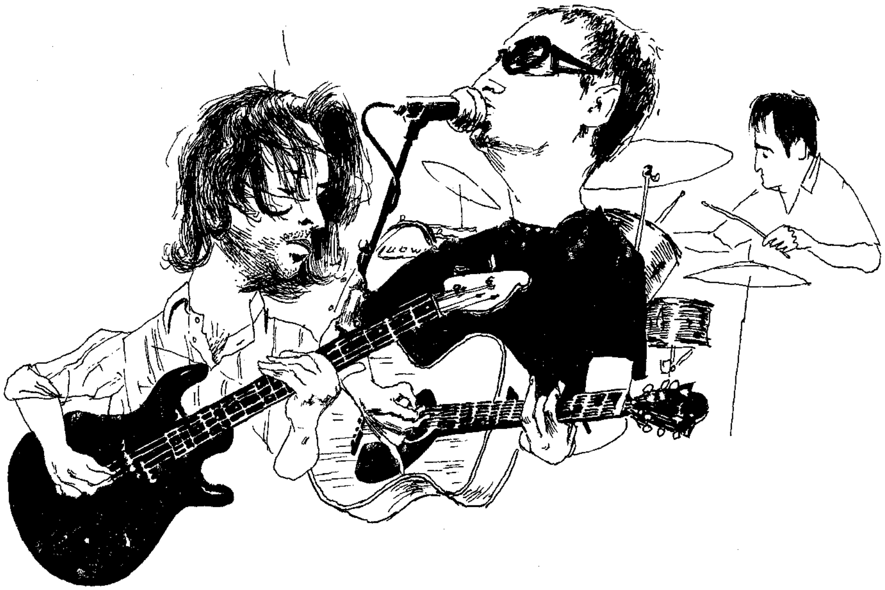
a Samba," a company favorite choreographed by Trey McIntyre and set to music by Astrud Gilberto; Twyla Tharp's "Sinatra Suite"; and Lar Lubovitch's "Fandango." (Joyce, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. March 8 at 2 and 8, March 9-11 at 8, March 12 at 2 and 8, and March 13 at 2 and 7:30.)

"DANCING HENRY V"
David Gordon's stirring evocation of Laurence Olivier's 1944 film, set to William Walton's score and to voice-overs of major speeches in the film by Olivier and Christopher Plummer, returns to Danspace, where it had its première last year. An ensemble cast enacts the Channel crossing and the Battle of Agincourt with ladders and chairs, and the regal Valda Setterfield plays the chorus. (St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave., at 10th St. 212-674-8194. March 10-13 at 8:30.)

"NOMAD: THE RIVER"
As a child growing up in China during the Cultural Revolution, the choreographer Yin Mei filled her diary with fevered Maoist propaganda. In a new contemporary dance-theatre piece, which uses both the Yangtze and the Ganges Rivers for inspiration, she reads aloud from her childhood journals beneath a haunting video projection as performers move to an abstract score of oceanic rhythms. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. March 9-12 at 7:30.)



The Manchester trio I Am Kloot plays the Mercury Lounge, Pianos, and Southpaw.

ANDY FRIEDMAN

CAITLIN COOK AND PAIGE MARTIN
Sarah Michelson curates an evening of new work by two emerging artists. In "Consciousness-Related Effects in Random Physical Systems," the Bessie-winning Martin casts both trained and untrained dancers in a dance that explores male potency and insecurity. And in Cook's solo, "eTTa aTTa oTo," flickering images are projected onto the dancer's moving body. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793. March 10-11 at 8.)

PETER BOAL & COMPANY
This may be the final performance of this promising young company: Boal, the City Ballet icon, heads to Seattle this summer to take over Pacific Northwest Ballet. In the troupe's season at the Joyce, Wendy Whelan and Boal perform in a new duet by Edwaard Liang, "Distant Cries," embroidering the Albinoni score with uncoiling arms and startling, elegant lifts. The hip-hop choreographer Victor Quijada (of Montreal's Rubberbandance Group) dances alongside Sean Suozzi and Andrew Veyette in the première of his "Soft Watching the First Implosion," a blend of street and classical dance set to Verdi. The program also features a new Shen Wei solo for Wendy Whelan and a rare Daniel Nagrin solo, from 1948, performed by Suozzi. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. March 15 at 8. Through March 20.)

PERFORMANCE MIX FESTIVAL
The program for the New Dance Alliance's nineteenth experimental festival includes a new-media drag opera by Montreal's 2boys.tv dance-theatre duo, contemporary pointe work from Cherylyn Lavagnino, and a twenties-style silent film by Mary Purdy with live piano accompaniment. David Parker and the Bang Group offer "Friends of Dorothy," a comic-romantic fantasy that sets two male dancers on a yellow brick road. (Joyce Soho, 155 Mercer St. 212-334-7479. March 8-13 at 8.)

INTRODANS
The Dutch ballet company's program is family friendly, with a full roster of larky fare, such as Jiří Kylián's Mozart tribute, "Sechs Tänze," with its overpowdered wigs, talc-fuelled sneezes, and whizzing ball gowns on wheels; David Parsons's "Instinct," in which a fuzzy monster puppet reveals a second pair of legs; and Hans van Manen's "Black Cake," in which a short man squires a statuesque beauty across the dance floor. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. March 10-11 at 7, March 12 at 2 and 7, and March 13 at noon and 5.)

ROXANE BUTTERFLY'S WORLDBEATS
For her new show, "Hoofalogie"—part of the 92nd Street Y's Harkness Dance Series—Butterfly trades in her former, all-female group, Beauteez N' the Beat, for a new ensemble emphasizing tap's global present. An African-American whiz kid (the sweet-faced Joseph Wiggan) joins a Japanese fly girl (Yoshiko Hida) and the Austrian master of Afro-Cuban tap (Max Pollak). The *tanguero* Pablo Veron participates via video, and the cornettist Graham Haynes ties everything together with an appropriately cosmopolitan score. (The Duke on 42nd Street, 229 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. March 9-10 and March 12 at 8 and March 13 at 2 and 7.)

LYDIA JOHNSON DANCE
A youthful energy underlies the balletic grace of Johnson's appealing company. In their season at Dicapo Opera Theatre, the dancers perform two premières. One is set to songs from Cake's new "Pressure Chief" album, performed by three women on and around wooden benches. In the other, a series of tender, interlocking pas de deux, three couples move to Philip Glass's Violin Concerto. The season also includes a revival of last year's "Untitled," which uses Henryk Gorecki's "Requiem for a Polka." (Dicapo Opera Theatre, 184 E. 76th St. 212-989-0989. March 10-12 at 8.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

TZADIK MUSIC FESTIVAL
You don't have to be Jewish to love John Zorn's intrepid record label, Tzadik. For the past decade, Tzadik ("righteous person" in Hebrew) has focussed on what might be called Jewish fusion, which blends a Semitic sensibility with all manner of musical genres. The monthlong concert series continues with **Rashanim,** a trio led by the guitarist Jon Madof. The **Children of Israel,** a saxophone-heavy ensemble known for their interpretations of Israeli folk tunes, are also performing. (Edmond J. Safra Hall, Museum of Jewish Heritage, 36 Battery Pl. 646-437-4202. March 9 at 7.)

THE ALLMAN BROTHERS
Formed in 1969, the Allmans have overcome deaths, drugs, and decades without a market for Southern rock while managing to remain one of the industry's most profitable live acts. In what has become an annual event, the Brothers roll into town for a ten-night stand at the Beacon Theatre. Note: The final show is a benefit for the Big House Foundation, which is devoted to opening and maintaining the Allman Brothers Museum, in Macon, Georgia. Gov't Mule, the Derek Trucks Band, Oteil and the Peacemakers, and others will join the band on that night. (Broadway at 74th St. 212-307-7171. March 10-12 at 8. Through March 22.)

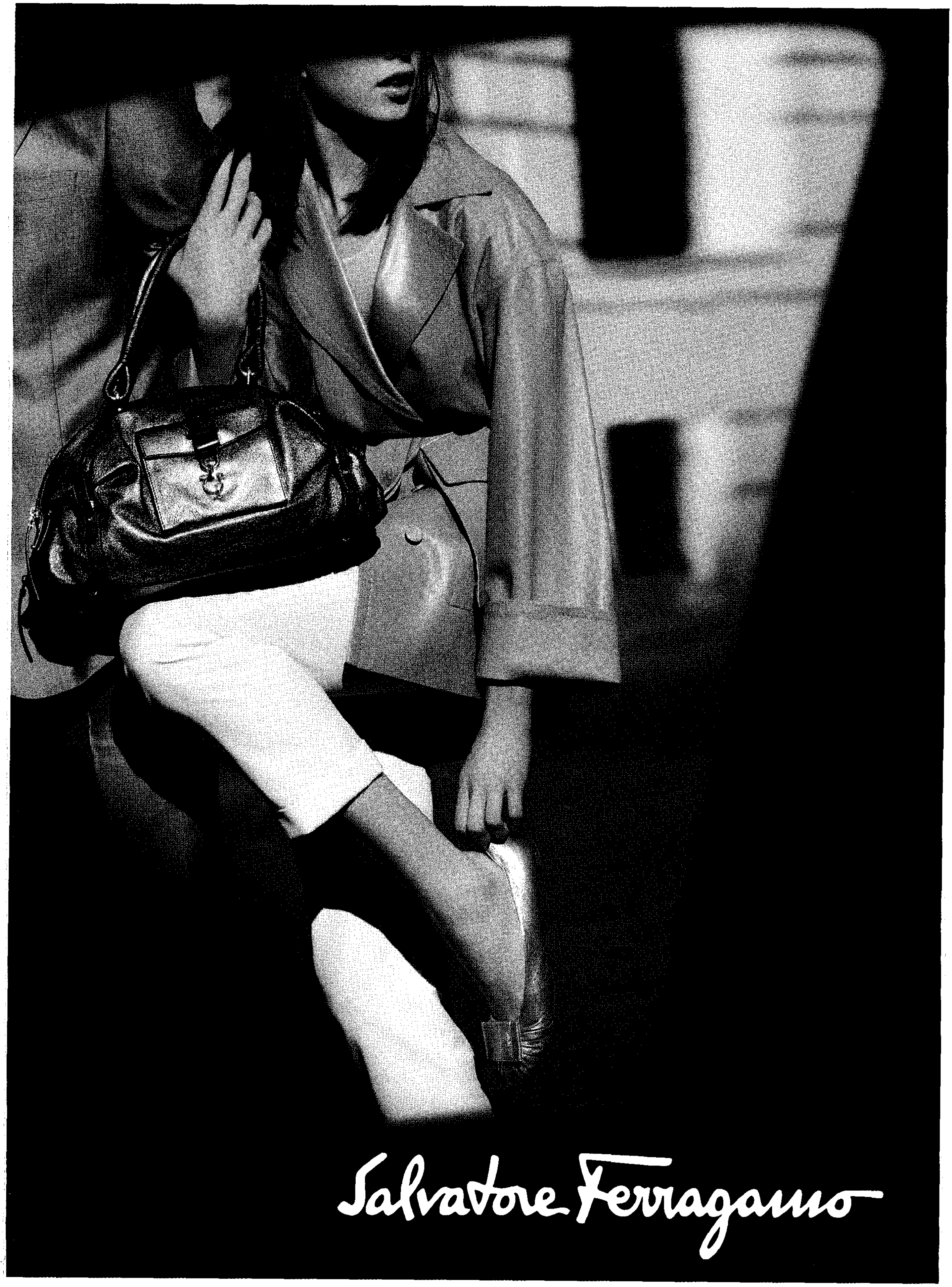
FRED HERSCH
Walt Whitman wouldn't have recognized the jazzy forms that the pianist and composer Fred Hersch has applied to excerpts from "Leaves of Grass," but the life-embracing poet would certainly have approved of the vibrant spirit behind the adaptation. Kurt Elling and Kate McGarry are the featured singers. (Zankel Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. March 11 at 7:30.)

ABBEY LINCOLN
The singer Lincoln is a jazz survivor with a biting delivery whose most stirring repertoire turns out to be her own songs. (Aaron Davis Hall, City College, Convent Ave. at 135th St. 212-650-7100. March 11 at 7:30.)

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
March 11 at 8: **Martin Hayes** and **Dennis Cahill** offer a pre-St. Patrick's Day celebration of Celtic musical culture. County Clare, Ireland, is both Hayes's birthplace and a source of inspiration for the accomplished fiddler. He and Cahill, his longtime guitar-playing accompanist, perform tunes that are a far cry from stereotypical jigs and reels. The lyrical songs are stripped down and as welcome as a slow saunter down a country lane. But when Hayes gets wound up onstage, with his arm furiously bowing and his long locks flying about, you might think it's the very banshee he's fleeing. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St.) March 12 at 8:30: The twenty-five-year-old Portuguese vocalist **Ana Moura** has risen to the top of the fado world, and tonight she makes her Carnegie Hall début, albeit in the basement. (Zankel Hall, Carnegie Hall.) March 13 at 7: Classical Persian music, with the Iranian vocalist **Mohammad Reza Shajarian,** the lute master **Hossein Alizadeh,** and **Kayhan Kalhor,** the virtuosic spike-fiddle player. (Rose Theatre, Broadway at 60th St. For more information about all of the shows, call 212-545-7536.)

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER
The guitarist John Scofield and the pianist Brad Mehldau are two of the most acclaimed stylists of the day. They each bring a trio here for this double bill. Backed by bass and drums, Scofield, an expansive improviser, gets the room he needs to roam. Mehldau's unit features the drummer Jeff Ballard and the bassist Larry Grenadier. (Rose Theatre, Broadway at 60th St. 212-721-6500. March 11-12 at 8.)

MARIANNE FAITHFULL
The voice has been a croak for decades now, and even Faithfull seems to have grown a bit weary of her pose of world-weariness. But she's still making records with younger collaborators who are in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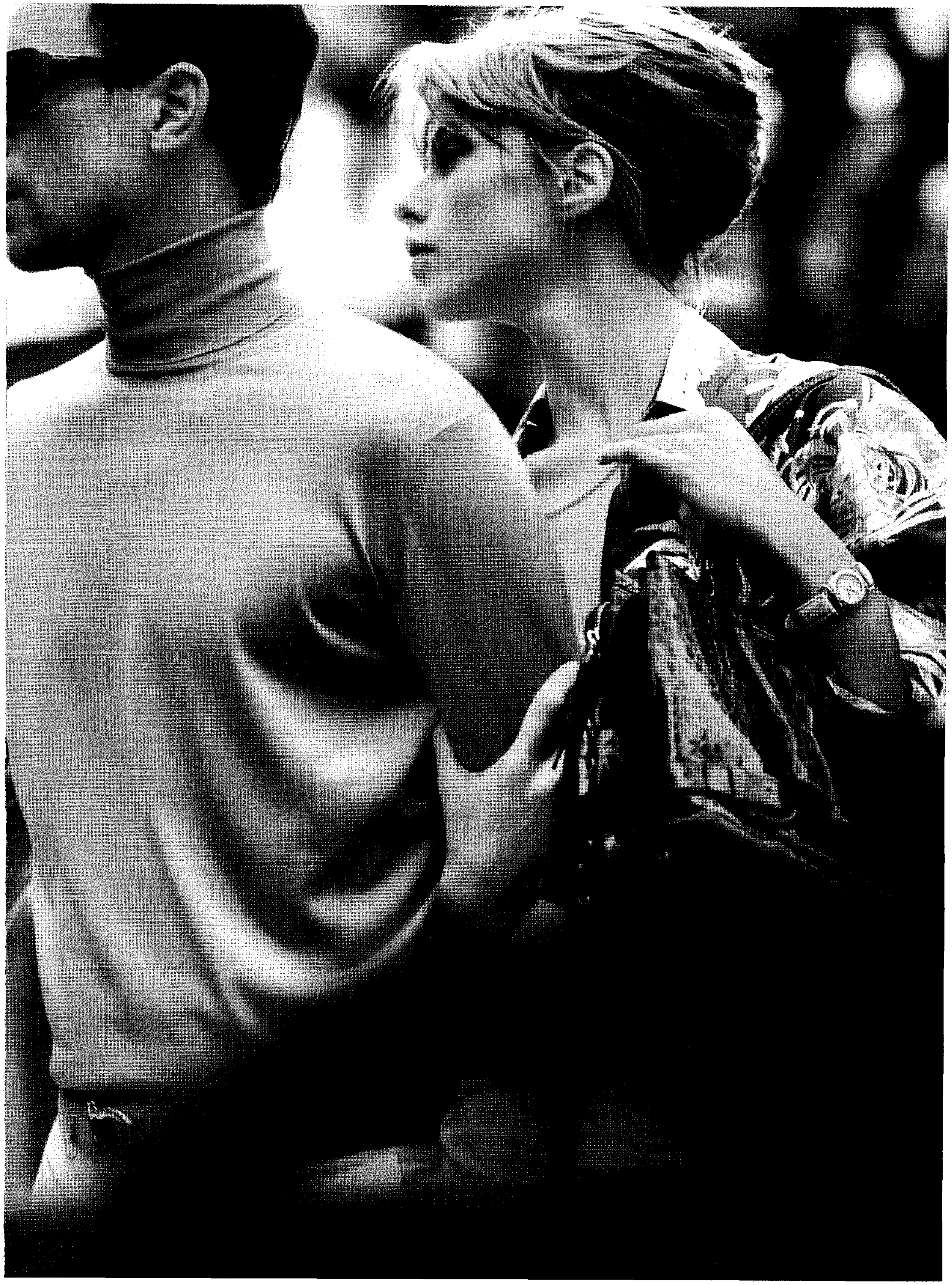

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thrall to her legend; the new one, "Before the Poison," features substantial contributions from Polly Jean Harvey and Nick Cave. In concert, expect the new material, plenty of Brecht and "Broken English," and maybe even "As Tears Go By." (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 212-307-7171. March 12 at 8.)

ASHLEE SIMPSON

Evidently undeterred by a lip-synching fiasco on "Saturday Night Live" and a vociferous booing at the Rose Bowl halftime show, the reality-show pop princess carries on her ambitious quest to eclipse her big sister's fame. (Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 212-307-7171. March 15-16 at 8.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BARBÈS

376 9th St., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-965-9177)—March 10: Rob Curto, a New York-based virtuoso of the accordion, organ, and piano, leads the band **Forro for All.** It plays the backcountry dance music from northwestern Brazil—think samba meets zydeco with a twist of merengue. March 12: American roots music with the **Wiyos.**

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL

237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—March 10: Playing arena rock when the arenas no longer welcome you is a lonely game, but the veteran pop-rocker **John Waite** is not looking back. His hair may have thinned since his days fronting the Babys and Bad English, but Waite's large, plangent voice remains as familiar as an old, comfortable sweater. March 15: **Jimmy Cliff.** Three decades ago, the movie "The Harder They Come" made the Jamaican reggae singer a star, and in the intervening years he's produced some twenty albums. His latest release is "Black Magic," a collaboration with Wyclef Jean, Annie Lennox, Sting, the late Joe Strummer, and others.

BOWERY BALLROOM

6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—March 9: The **Hot Hot Heat** were briefly the belles of the indie-rock ball two years ago, but scores of bands have since copied the Canadian foursome's retro-New Wave pop formula. Back to generate some buzz before the April release of its sophomore album, "Elevator," the band trots out new songs and a new guitarist, Luke Paquin. March 10: The noisy Canadian duo **Death from Above 1979** traffics in volatile music that consists solely of vocals, bass, and drums. March 11: **Bettie Serveert.** This Amsterdam quartet (the name is Dutch for "Betty serves," a reference to some long-forgotten tennis legend) plays deeply satisfying garage rock with a lean, let's-make-a-record-in-a-day sound. March 15: The British trio **Doves** evolved from a workaday dance act named Sub Sub in the mid-nineties into practitioners of lush, emotive rock. On their new album, "Some Cities," they add more propulsive rhythms, but the guitars still swoon.

IRVING PLAZA

17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—March 11: **Citizen Cope** is Clarence Greenwood, a Memphis-born singer-songwriter who moved here from Washington, D.C. He favors music that often falls through the cracks; complex narratives about everything from race to life on the streets to religion are layered over slow grooves and funky beats. March 12-13: The jam band **Rusted Root,** a staple in collegiate Hacky Sack circles.

JOE'S PUB

425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—March 10: **Keren Ann,** an Israeli-born singer-songwriter now based in France, caresses her acoustic guitar and sings about love and loss. Her new album is called "Nolita." With **A Girl Called Eddy,** which is the New York-based crooner and composer Erin Moran. March 12: Travis Sullivan's **Bjorkestra** rearranges the Icelandic dynamo's repertoire for a jazz big band. March 14: Some forty years ago, the multi-instrumentalist and composer **Mulatu Astatke** created "Ethio jazz," which combined Western forms (he was educated at the Berklee College of Music, in Boston) with the rhythms of his native Ethiopia. Last year the Boston-based **Either/Orchestra** became the first big band to play Ethiopia since Duke Ellington visited the country in 1973. Astatke sat in with the orchestra, and now he's travelled to the United States to continue the jam.

POP NOTES

THE RETURN OF THE KING

The dirty little secret of Solomon Burke's **"Make Do With What You Got"** (Shout! Factory) is in the title, which hints at the diminished vocal prowess of the soul legend. It's all relative, of course, but the country-gospel acrobat of "Just Out of Reach (of My Two Empty Arms)" has given way to a more earthbound operator. Burke can still sing better than most, but he can't sing as well as Sam Cooke or Otis Redding or O. V. Wright or Al Green or Howard Tate or even the young Solomon Burke.

What's left is a tastemaker, and a damnably honorable one. As he did on his Grammy-winning 2002 album, "Don't Give Up On Me," Burke has selected a set of contemplative mid-tempo songs by the best writers of the rock-and-soul era. The earlier album had Elvis Costello, Tom Waits, Bob Dylan, Nick Lowe, Van Morrison, and more, mostly supplying original material. This time Morrison and Dylan are back, along with Robbie Robertson, and Jagger and Richards, but Burke and his producers decided not to dun new songs out of them. Instead, Burke tackles Robertson's "It Makes No Difference" (a standout on which he sounds eerily like Morrison), Morrison's "At the Crossroads" (here, the vocal similarity is simply a distraction), and Dylan's "What Good Am I?" (done half too fast, with a strained crescendo). Late in the game, there are a pair of strong surprises. The Rolling Stones' "I Got the Blues," which is cast as payback for the Stones' covers of "Cry to Me" and "Everybody Needs Somebody to Love," is the only song to make real use of Burke's age; it comes off more as knowing plea than as tortured lament. Hank Williams's "Wealth Won't Save Your Soul," taken slow (and at face value), is a fitting capstone.

—Ben Greenman

KNITTING FACTORY

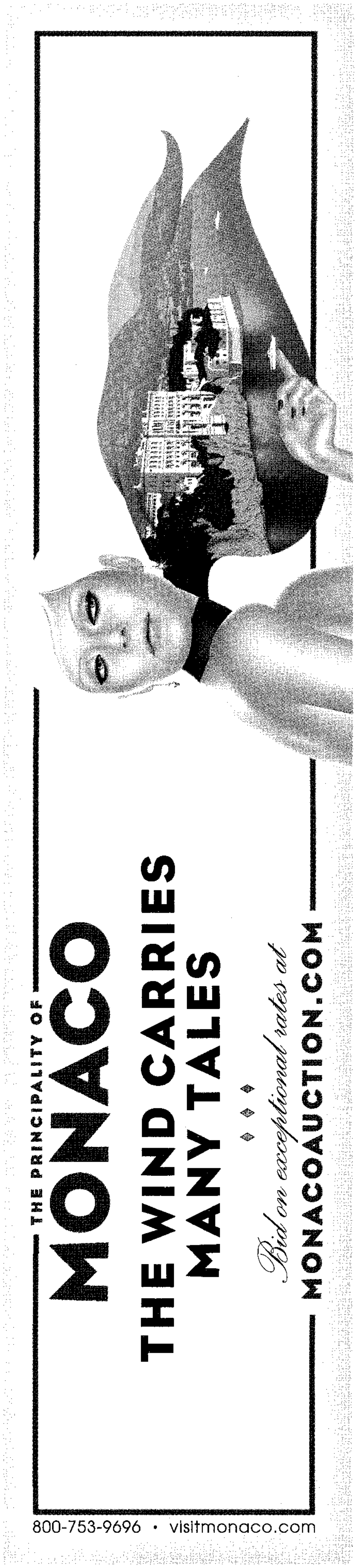
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3055)—March 10: **Maritime** features former members of the indie-rock groups the Promise Ring and the Dismemberment Plan. March 11: The Irish Rhapsody Festival brings in the Celtic rock of the **Fenians,** who despite their appropriate name actually hail from California. 15: The Finnish string quartet **Apocalyptica** came into this world some ten years ago playing Metallica covers. They quickly discovered that the idea was wearing thin, so they turned their bows on other heavy-metal fare and original compositions.

MAKOR

35 W. 67th St. (212-601-1000)—March 15: **Pablo Menéndez** is best known for Mezcla, the Afro-Cuban jazz-rock septet he founded two decades ago. The California-born guitarist has spent much of his life in Cuba, and his trademark fusion of Yoruba music, bebop, and salsa is in evidence on his first solo album, "Havana Blues Mambo." It's also full of interpretations of tunes by such masters as Thelonious Monk, Chucho Valdéz, and Silvio Rodríguez. Menéndez is backed by his old band onstage.

MERCURY LOUNGE

217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—March 8: Montreal's **Stars** bury grim insights about sex and



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romance under layers of fuzzy guitar and antique synthesizers. With **Apostle of Hustle,** a side project of Andrew Whiteman, from Broken Social Scene, and **I Am Kloot,** a Manchester-based trio specializing in tender and bittersweet rock songs that have a tendency to get under your skin and lodge themselves in your psyche. The singer and guitarist Johnny Bramwell delivers intimate lyrics with a confessional tone, and the drummer Andy Hargreaves's sophisticated brush-and-stick work keeps the beat moving and shifting. I Am Kloot have a devoted following at home, but they've never played New York City before (see also Pianos and Southpaw).

NORTHSIX

66 N. 6th St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn (718-599-5103)—March 10: You can often judge a person by the company she keeps, and the same is true for bands. **Bonfire Madigan** is a little string outfit led by the dynamic cellist Madigan Shive, who likes touring with the industrial-rock pioneers Laibach, so it's not surprising that she stirs up a ruckus. With the exceedingly adventurous bassist **CJ Boyd** and the local experimental-rock band **Tungsten 74.** March 11: **Pit Er Pat,** a Chicago-based organ trio.

PIANOS

158 Ludlow St. (212-505-3733)—March 10: **I Am Kloot** (see the Mercury Lounge). March 14: The Danish label Crunchy Frog brings in two of its acts. **Powersolo** plays rollicking country blues of the Southern-roadhouse variety. **EPO-555** leavens its pop confections with a touch of electronics.

RODEO BAR

375 Third Ave., at 27th St. (212-683-6500)—March 11: **20 Miles,** the surprisingly melodic, back-porch rock group led by Judah Bauer, the guitarist for the Jon Spencer Blues Explosion. March 12: The **Demolition String Band** rides high on Elena Skye's fetching vocals and the virtuosity of guitarist Boo Reiners. They sing about such typical country subjects as drinkin' and cheatin', but they don't appear to be afraid of anything—they even cover, quite successfully, Madonna's "Like a Prayer."

SATALLA

37 W. 26th St. (212-576-1155)—March 9: The Ukrainian folk music of **Mariana Sadowska.** March 11: The Zimbabwe native and pioneering mbira (thumb piano) player **Stella Chiweshe.** March 13: The dancing sounds of southwestern Louisiana, courtesy of **Terry and the Zydeco Bad Boys.** March 15: The Celtic songbird **Karan Kasey,** formerly of Solas, celebrates the release of her new album, "Chasing the Sun."

S.O.B.'S

204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (212-243-4940)—March 9: The sexy young soul singer **St. Juste.** March 10: The local favorites **Si*Sé** fuse electronic beats to Latin rhythms. March 11: Salsa with the trombonist **Jimmy Bosch.** March 15: Roots reggae with the St. Croix native **Dezarie.**

SOUTHPAW

125 Fifth Ave., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-230-0236)—March 9: The charming and enigmatic singer Chan Marshall, who goes by the name **Cat Power,** gives a solo show. March 11: **I Am Kloot** (see the Mercury Lounge). March 12: The **Figgs,** who achieved a small measure of renown for being Graham Parker's backing band for a few tours, play a sharp version of three-chord pop punk.

TRIBECA ROCK CLUB

16 Warren St. (212-766-1070)—March 11: **Jon Cleary,** the British blues keyboard player with a penchant for the music of New Orleans, stops by with his band the Absolute Monster Gentlemen.

TONIC

107 Norfolk St. (212-358-7503)—March 11: The **Angels of Light,** the protean group led by the ex-Swans front man and impresario Michael Gira, join **Akron/Family,** Gira's newest discovery, for a double record-release party to benefit this troubled downtown venue (it is facing eviction, in part because the rent money has gone to capital repairs, the latest of which involves a failed sewage pipe). Gira produced Akron/Family's self-titled début record, and he enjoyed working with the band so much that they backed him for his own new record, "The Angels of Light Sing 'Other People.' " Gira sings over a slew of instruments (including organ, banjo, Casio keyboards, and glockenspiel), and the music is full of country picking, slide guitar, and beautiful backup singing from his youthful (the oldest member is twenty-six) and earnest band. The Akron/Family, for their part, play passionate and unorthodox folk music that embraces dissonant rock guitar and Beach Boys-like vocal harmonies, as well as more traditional mournful balladry. At midnight, the multilingual outer-borough ensemble **Barbez** does its part for the cause.

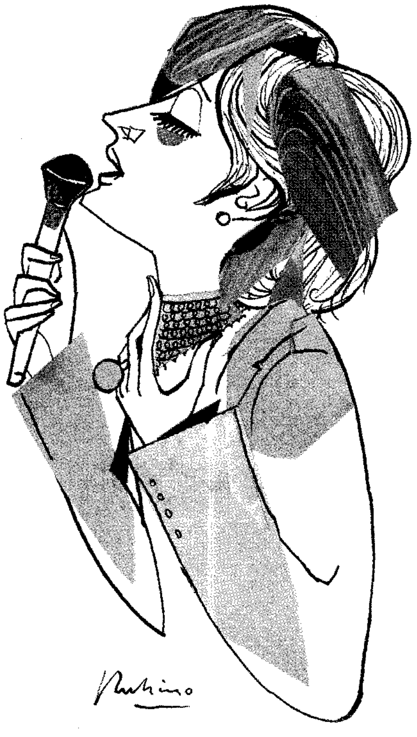
JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL

59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Through March 26: The vocalist **Tierney Sutton** and her trio. Sutton's most recent album, "Dancing in the Dark," is an homage to Frank Sinatra, but she's prepared a new show of standards for this engagement.

BIRDLAND

315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—March 9-12: The **Tomaz Stanko** quartet. One of the world's most original and inventive jazz trumpeters, Stanko, a native of Poland, is known for deeply expressive horn work, parcelled out in judicious amounts of long held notes and darting phrasing. His young accompanists have just released their own impressive début on ECM, "Trio."



Marianne Faithfull performs at Town Hall on March 12.

BLUE NOTE

131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—March 10-13: A double bill with the **Avishai Cohen** trio and **Another Kind of Blue.** Cohen, one of the most gifted bassists of his generation, is finding his own voice as a composer. His new album is called "At Home." The trombonist Conrad Herwig and his band Another Kind of Blue liven up Miles Davis's repertoire with a touch of Latin music.

CARLYLE HOTEL

Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound murals, and, through April 9, **Betty Buckley.**

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA

Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—Through March 13: It's good to have **Bobby Watson's** Original Horizon band with us again. The exuberant saxophonist reunites with the drummer Victor Lewis and the trumpeter Terrell Stafford, two linchpins of this smart, audience-friendly outfit.

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY

540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (212-339-4095)—Through March 12: **Chita Rivera.** What becomes a theatre legend most? How about defining roles in the original Broadway productions of "West Side Story," "Bye Bye Birdie," "Chicago," and "Kiss of the Spider Woman"? Expect the actress, singer, and dancer to tear up Feinstein's sliver of a stage.

IRIDIUM

1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—March 9-13: The **Monty Alexander** trio. From tributes to Frank Sinatra to reggae-jazz recitals, the Jamaican-born pianist has tried it all. He's a crowd-pleaser who likes to give people their money's worth, proof of which can be found on his new album, "Live at the Iridium." Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

LE JAZZ AU BAR

41 E. 58th St. (212-308-9455)—Through March 20: **Rosa Passo's** voice oozes with the sensual plaintiveness of the very best Brazilian bossa-nova singers. Her two Stateside releases, "Entre Amigos" and "Amorosa," are filled with gentle, entrancing, and generally gorgeous sounds.

JAZZ STANDARD

116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—March 10-13: The **Vinicius Cantuária** quartet. The Brazilian guitarist Cantuária spent the early part of his career writing songs for such superstar compatriots as Caetano Veloso and Gal Costa. Since moving to New York, more than a decade ago, his music has reflected his acquaintance with a radical set of musicians, including Bill Frisell, Arto Lindsay, David Byrne, and Laurie Anderson.

VILLAGE VANGUARD

178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Through March 13: What does **Bill McHenry** have that the majority of his saxophone-playing peers lack? An individual voice, for one thing. This quick-witted young tenor saxophonist is joined here by the open-minded septuagenarian drummer Paul Motian, the bassist Reid Anderson (of Bad Plus Trio fame) and the guitarist Ben Monder. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

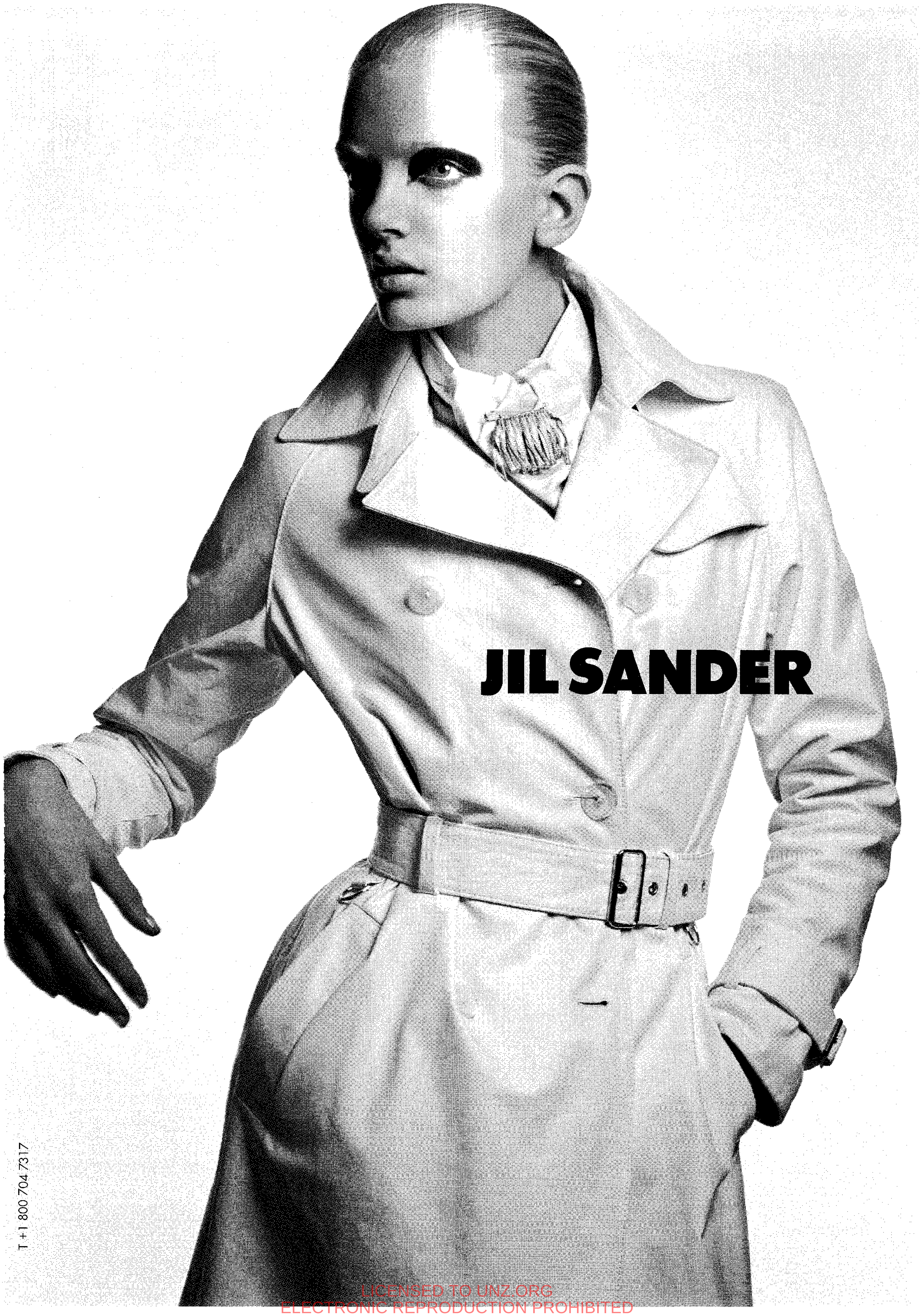
ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—The retrospective exhibition **"Diane Arbus Revelations"** opens March 8. ♦ Leopard prints, ostrich plumes, buckskin, snakeskin, peacock feathers, and the occasional taxidermied bird: **"Wild: Fashion Untamed"** presents a zoo of options for adorning the body with bestial extravagance. More than a hundred costumes ranging from the eighteenth century to today display a profusion of patterns and silhouettes, some decorated with iridescent feathers or beetles' wings, others draped in butter-soft leathers or furs with muzzles and claws attached. Capes, wings, tails, and masks abound, as designers from Alaïa to Yamamoto dress women for roles as predator, social butterfly, sex kitten, bird in a gilded cage. Through March 13. ♦ **"Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640): The Drawings"** discovers the Flemish progenitor of the baroque in modes other than the bombastic rhetoric of his only too well known paintings. Trenchant early copies of Michelangelos and ancient statuary testify to Rubens's analytical intelligence, and late, scrumptiously flattering portraits bespeak his diplomatic subtlety. Most exciting is a truth-telling realism, apparent in great pictures of animals—ominously sulking lions, a perfectly stupid ox—and exotic persons, such as a Jesuit missionary in Chinese dress. But the show's parts don't cohere. The Walt Disney of his day, an industrialist of standardized pleasures, Rubens plainly was indifferent to anything about his art except its worldly success. Through April 3. ♦ Northern Italy was a hotbed of artistic innovation at the dawn of the fourteenth

CORNEL RUBINO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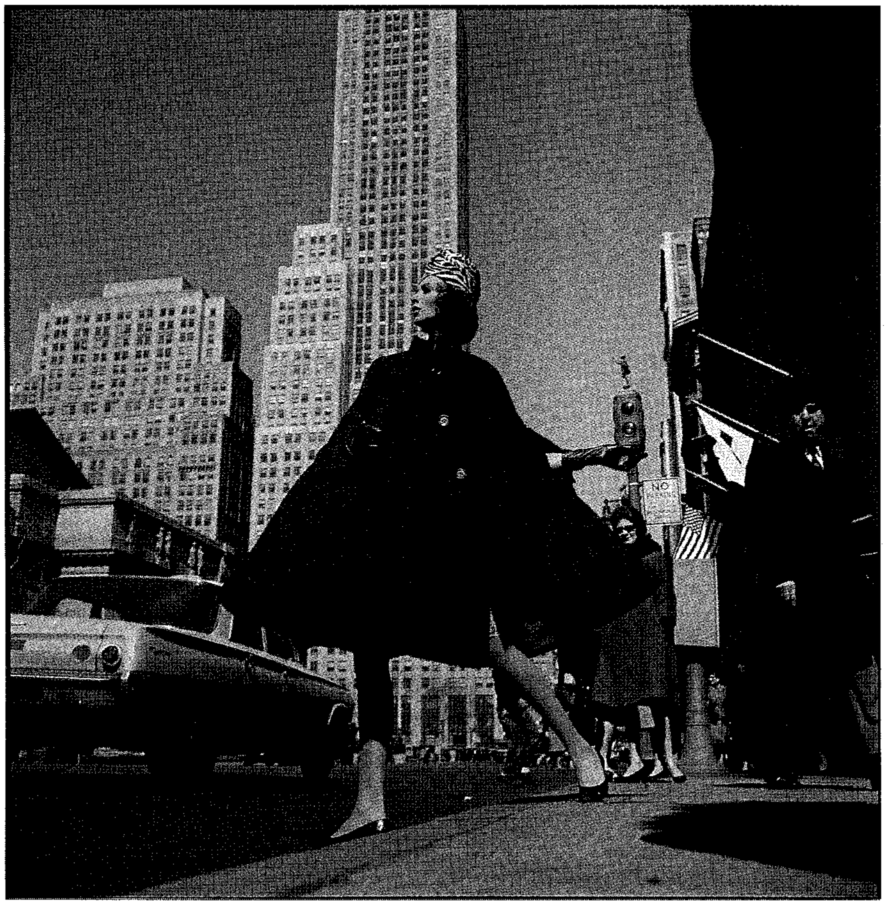


"New York, 1962," by Rico Puhlmann, at F.I.T. (see Photography).

century. Duccio, Giotto, and Cimabue, along with followers like Simone Martini and Pietro Lorenzetti, were revolutionizing pictorial space and humanizing their gold-leafed saints with naturalistic expressions. Both trends are illustrated in Duccio's "Madonna and Child," circa 1300, a triumphant recent acquisition for the Met. The small panel situates the Virgin behind a painted parapet, as if she shared the viewer's world. Gazing sorrowfully at the child on her lap, she lets him play with the folds of her blue mantle—"Like a loving mom, she knows what's in store for him," as a guard recently remarked to a visitor. Through May 15. ♦ **"Left Unfinished by Albrecht Dürer."** Through March 27. ♦ **"From Filippo Lippi to Piero della Francesca: Fra Carnevale and the Making of a Renaissance Master."** Through May 1. ♦ **"The Kano School: Orthodoxy and Iconoclasm."** Through June 5. ♦ **"Heritage of Power: Ancient Sculpture from West Mexico, the Andrall E. Pearson Family Collection."** Through April 3. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Thomas Demand,"** a review of the German artist's epic paper projects in photographs and film. Through May 30. ♦ In **"Contemporary Voices: Works from the UBS Art Collection,"** some forty works promised to MOMA as a corporate gift are accompanied by thirty more from the firm's collection. The exhibition was arranged by in-house curators targeting gaps in the museum's own holdings, and it is installed old-MOMA style, as a chronological primer on late-twentieth-century art. Selections from the sixties, seventies, and eighties include an excellent Guston, two good Richters, a nice Artschwager, and a wonderful room of Susan Rothenbergs. Younger artists, not surprisingly, are less well served; in the last room, only Andreas Gursky is represented by a really first-class piece. Through April 25. ♦ **"Groundswell: Constructing the Contemporary Landscape,"** a survey of innovative landscape-design projects from the last twenty years. Through May 16. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"The Hugo Boss Prize 2004: Rirkrit Tiravanija."** Tiravanija, the winner of the fifth biennial Hugo Boss Prize, likes to turn his viewers into collaborators. For this project, he is installing a small (but operational) television station inside the museum. Opens March 9. ♦ **"Recent Acquisitions: Slater Bradley's 'Doppelganger Trilogy' "** gathers three of the artist's recent videos, for which he staged utterly convincing faux performances by Kurt Cobain, Michael Jackson, and Ian Curtis. Weirdly, thrillingly, the videos can play like lost bootlegs from fallen heroes. Opens March 11. ♦ **"School of Paris,"** a selection of works from the permanent collection. Opens March 9. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—**"Cy Twombly: Fifty Years of Works on Paper"** proves that the more works by Twombly that you see at once, the better each one gets. Fugitive spontaneities of line and texture can seem incidental, or even accidental, in isolation; in quantity, their teeming persistence gently overwhelms. Twombly's style is all nuance, inflecting desultory scribbles and scrawls. His tender ardor for history-saturated Mediterranean and Caribbean eros builds a charge of sea-breezy, elegiac joys. If he forces things at times—with tricky numbers and glyphs in the nineteen-sixties or, lately, with lurid color—it is to remind us of his ambition. This lyric poet aspires to the laurels of an epic bard. Through May 8. ♦ **"Tim Hawkinson,"** a mid-career retrospective of the California artist's diverse inventions. Through May 29. ♦ **"Ellen Gallagher: DeLuxe."** A series of embellished images based on advertisements from mid-century African-American magazines. Through May 15. ♦ **"Political Nature,"** a modest gathering of prints and drawings by Walton Ford, Trenton Doyle Hancock, Frank Moore, and Stephanie Syjuco. Through March 27. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART

200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Basquiat"** opens March 11 (see This Week). (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

ASIA SOCIETY

Park Ave. at 70th St. (212-288-6400)—**"Edge of Desire: Recent Art in India,"** an exhibition presented jointly with the Queens Museum of Art. Through June 5. ♦ **"Imperial Elegance: Chinese Ceramics from the Asia Society's Rockefeller Collection."** Through May 1. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Friday evenings until 9.)

CHELSEA ART MUSEUM

556 W. 22nd St. (212-255-0719)—**"Such Stuff as Dreams Are Made On,"** a survey of contemporary Israeli art, includes work by Tamar Getter, Gil Marco Shani, and Etty Abergel, among others. Opens March 9. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, noon to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

DAHESH MUSEUM OF ART

580 Madison Ave., at 57th St. (212-759-0606)—**"First Seen: Photographs of the World's Peoples, 1840-1880."** Through May 1. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6.)

FRICK COLLECTION

1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—The British collection **"Renaissance and Baroque Bronzes from the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge"** arrives for its first American tour with thirty-six small statues, by mostly little-known French, Dutch, German, and Italian artists, dating from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries. Mythological subjects include a tabletop Leda necking with the swan and Ganymede clutched by the eagle; naturalism is represented by a precisely observed strutting ostrich and a robust, bellowing bull. A gruesomely deluxe "Flagellation of Christ" in gilt bronze mounted on green marble stands out among works dealing with religious themes. Through April 24. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Sundays, 1 to 6.)

GROLIER CLUB

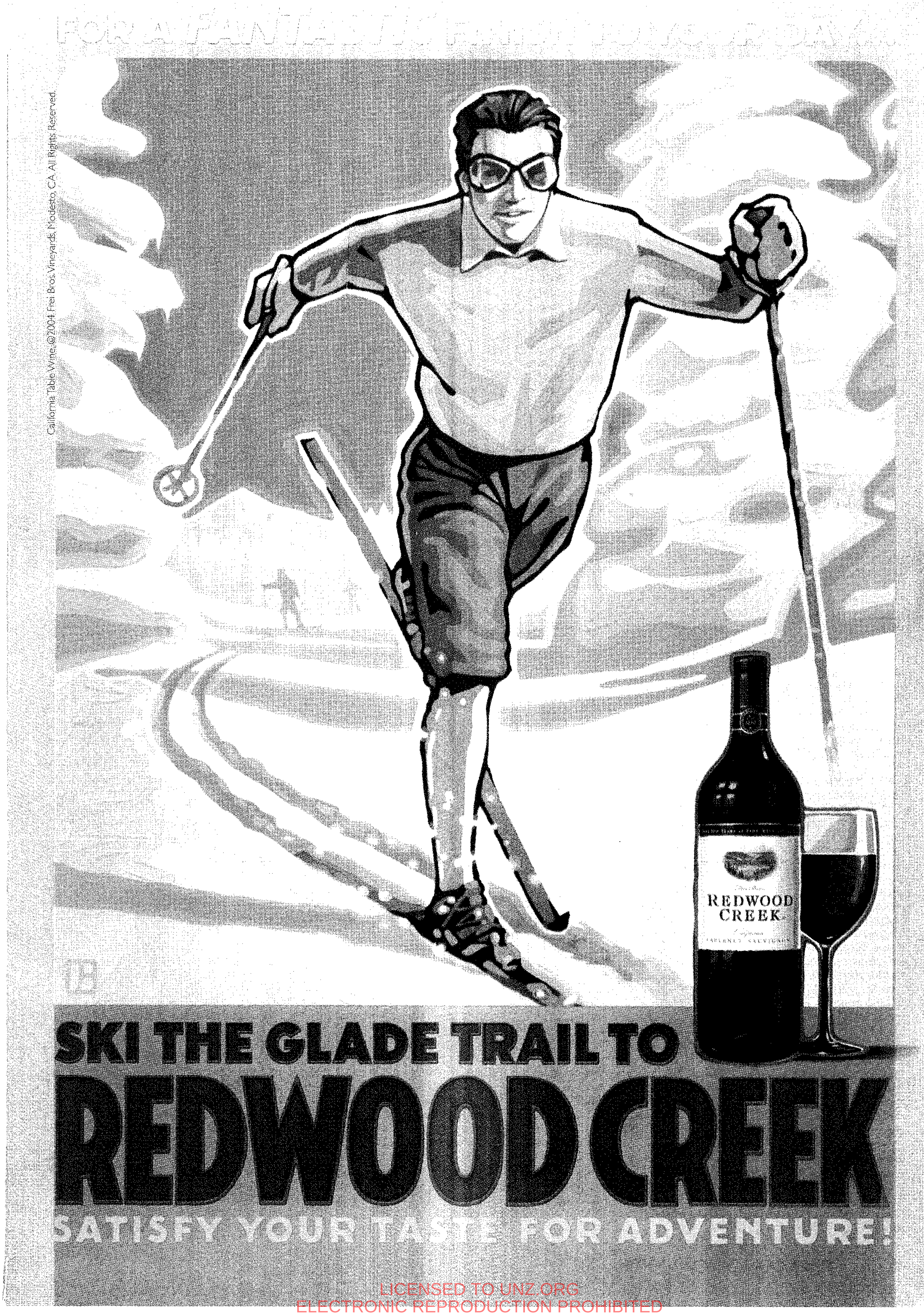
47 E. 60th St. (212-838-6690)—**"Past Presence: The Objects of Study at the Getty Research Institute."** Items from the California library's archives illustrate the ways artists have used their mediums to contemplate the passage of time. Through April 30. (Open Mondays through Saturdays, 10 to 5.)

MUSEO DEL BARRIO

Fifth Ave. at 104th St. (212-831-7272)—The selection in **"Retratos: 2,000 Years of Latin American Portraits"** rambles from head-shaped vessels from fourth-century Peru to Diego Rivera's 1946 painting of a Mexican movie star. Also present are the oldest signed portrait in South America ("The Mulattoes of Esmeraldas," 1599), paintings of young nuns on their "coronation" day, and Frida Kahlo's "Self-Portrait with Thorn Necklace and Hummingbird." Contemporary art gets short shrift, but there are three wonderful examples: Vik Muniz's portraits of sugar workers' children in St. Kitts, drawn in sugar and photographed; Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle's "portraits" based on DNA analysis; and Oscar Muñoz's poetic "Breath," steel disks featuring photos from the obituary section of Colombian newspapers that can only be seen when you step close and breathe on them. Through March 20. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 5, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Fifth Ave. at 104th St. (212-534-1672)—Oh, to have been at a ball in New York in 1860 and worn a Worth & Bobergh gown in silver silk flocked with coral velvet to meet the Prince of Wales! Or, for that matter, how nice it would be to slip into Maggie Norris's ecru silk-satin corset and skirt, worn by Nicole Kidman on the cover of *Vanity Fair* in 2001. These and other gorgeous getups, including shoes, headdresses, faux jewels, and a wall of high-style head shots and night-life photographs, comprise **"Glamour, New York Style,"** a shamelessly indulgent paean to decades of local chic. Through July 4. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)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NATIONAL ACADEMY MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-369-4880)—**"Surrealism U.S.A."** is a superb roundup of paintings and sculptures from the nineteen-thirties and forties representing modernism's version of punk. The walls of the venerable old mansion are tricked out with black paint and twine and hung with work that successfully marries the academic with the truly outré. The usual suspects—Dali, Ernst, Man Ray, and Tanguy—are joined by American "Social Surrealists," who blended hallucinogenic imagery with socially responsible themes, the self-anointed California post-Surrealists (Helen Lundeberg, Reuben Kadish), and the de rigueur Joseph Cornell, as well as paintings by Dorothea Tanning and Charles Rain, David Smith's steel-and-bronze "Reliquary House," and a knobbly Noguchi made with bones. Through May 8. (Open Wednesdays and Thursdays, noon to 5, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6.)

NEW MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART
Temporarily located in the Chelsea Museum, 556 W. 22nd St. (212-219-1222)—**"East Village USA"** revisits the East Village scene of the early and mid-eighties: neo-expressionist painting, Neo-Geo objects, punk music, graffiti, performance art, fly-by-night galleries, political rage, sexual shenanigans. The fast, frenetic sensations of Keith Haring and Kenny Scharf, Crash and Lady Pink, and David Wojnarowicz and Mike Bidlo, among dozens of others whom one critic dubbed "Puerilists," flare and fade anew. (You had to be there.) The most substantial talents—Jean-Michel Basquiat, Nan Goldin, Jeff Koons, Philip Taaffe, Karen Finley—feel a mite detached, now, from the first New York avant-garde that shrugged off global perspectives to party locally. The rest is entropy. Through March 19. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, noon to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
170 Central Park W., at 77th St. (212-873-3400)—**"Audubon's Aviary"** pairs forty of the artist's original watercolors with ornithological models and mounts, video footage of the different birds, and an audio presentation of birdcalls. Through March 27. ♦ **"Thomas Paine: Patriot and Provocateur."** Through April 24. ♦ Three hundred years' worth of New York cityscapes are on view in **"Impressions of New York: Prints from the New-York Historical Society,"** allowing viewers to observe in flip-book fashion the evolution of streets, parks, and waterways. Through March 20. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6.)

P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER
22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—**"Greater New York 2005,"** a co-production with the Museum of Modern Art, rounds up a hundred and fifty artists from around the city who have emerged in the last five years. Opens March 13. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, noon to 6.)

QUEENS MUSEUM OF ART
Flushing Meadows–Corona Park (718-592-9700)—**"Edge of Desire: Recent Art in India,"** an exhibition co-presented with the Asia Society. Through June 5. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 5.)

RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART
150 W. 17th St. (212-620-5000)—New York's newest museum presents **"Tibet: Treasures from the Roof of the World,"** a collection that celebrates Tibet's cultural and spiritual history, untainted by the political controversies of the present. Items include intricately embroidered mandalas that serve as technical drawings of an idealized universe, sutras (Buddhist texts) written on palm leaves, copper sculptures of deities, ornate pegs to stake down negative spiritual energy, and a board game about enlightenment titled Rebirth, invented in the thirteenth century by a devoted son for his ailing mother. Many of the works on view have never travelled to the West before, and, given their fragility, are not likely to return. Through May 8. (Open Tuesdays and Saturdays, 11 to 7; Wednesdays and Sundays, 11 to 5; and Thursdays and Fridays, 11 to 9.)

TABLES FOR TWO

COUVRON
508 Greenwich St. (212-966-6225)—In this still lonely area of West SoHo, where grunge (a U.P.S. shipping depot) co-exists with glamour (multimillion-dollar apartments), three adjoining restaurants, of which Couvron is the southernmost, seem to be huddling together for warmth. Like the neighborhood, Couvron has an appealingly motley heritage. Owned by the husband-and-wife team of Maura Jarach and the chef Tony Demes, it is named for the small town in Picardy where Jarach was born (she moved here, with her American parents, at the age of five). The couple ran a well-regarded restaurant of the same name in Portland, Oregon, for eight years but had an itch to get back to New York, and they opened Couvron last September. The place is not without its contradictions. Jarach doesn't stand on ceremony, greeting you in jeans and a long-sleeved black T-shirt, as if she had just come from a poetry reading at the Ear Inn, around the corner, and yet Demes's inventive menu is unambiguously high-end. The wine list, too, favors the kind of bottles that are out of reach for anyone working in a field in which the words "year-end bonus" are never heard. (Luckily, there is a wonderful and affordable selection of wines by the glass.)

Demes attended the Culinary Institute of America, and in the restaurant's offerings there is evidence not just of France and Oregon but also of those classroom kitchens—there is a peacockish strut and splendor to the dishes, as if the chef is saying to his teachers, "Look what I can do!" A delicately sweet peekytoe-crab-salad appetizer incorporates small beet and pear cubes topped by a mad scientist's cap of frisée; an earthier start to the meal is a creamy Hudson Valley foie gras on toasted brioche, with savory sauce and date purée. It is so rich that it almost has to be shared and so good that it should be. Some of the showmanship is less successful: the monkfish, which arrives shaped like a sushi roll and wrapped in bacon, is a little too firm for the arrangement, and doesn't cut pleasingly. The flavors work beautifully, though. You probably won't even notice the absence of salt and pepper shakers on the tables. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays for dinner. Entrées $22-$34.)

—*Nancy Franklin*

THE SCULPTURE CENTER
44-19 Purves St., Long Island City (718-361-1750)—**"Petah Coyne: Above and Beneath the Skin."** Through April 10. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 11 to 6.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM
144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—Lamar Peterson sends the wide-eyed family of four at the center of his series of new paintings on a wild ride. A Hawaiian family vacation finds Dad blowing up like a parade balloon and drifting out over the moonlit sea. "Mother Nature's Favorite Flower" is a blissed-out blue nude who joins the foursome for a picnic, while in "Planting the Tree" they receive help from an alien. Unfazed by it all, they never stop smiling. Peterson's psychedelic cartoon surrealism cites everyone from Francis Bacon to Romare Bearden, but his candy-colored palette and flattened figures are highly distinctive. Through March 27. ♦ **"Meschac Gaba: Tresses"** comprises eighteen sculptures based on buildings in New York and Benin, all crafted out of artificial braids. Through March 27. ♦ The survey **"African Queen"** cuts a wide swath through its subject—representations of black women—while also functioning as a review of contemporary African-diaspora art. Through March 27. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6; Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

GALLERIES–UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

MARLENE DUMAS
Two decades of the South African artist's paintings and works on paper. Through April 23. (Zwirner & Wirth, 32 E. 69th St. 212-517-8677.)

ROBERT MORRIS
Looking at this body of recent work, it's hard to believe Morris was a founder of sixties minimalism. Instead of spare abstraction, the encaustic-on-wood panel paintings feature grim, abandoned interiors that call to mind de Chirico's dramatically oblique angles or Edward Hopper's crisp American gothics. The white "Weeping House" has tar-black pigment dripping from the windowsills; "Park at Dusk" recalls Edward Gorey, but under a swooning, waxy, yellow-and-green sky. The objects raining from the sky in one painting appear to be evenly spaced neckties, à la Magritte's bowler hats, until you learn the title: "House and Bombs." Through March 19. (Castelli, 18 E. 77th St. 212-249-4470.)

Short List

RICHARD HICKAM
Stone, 113 E. 90th St. 212-987-4997.
Through March 26.

DAVID KLAMEN
Richard Gray, 1018 Madison Ave., at 78th St.
212-472-8787. Through March 25.

LANE TWITCHELL
Greenberg Van Doren, 730 Fifth Ave., at 57th St.
212-445-0444. Through March 19.

UNICA ZÜRN
Ubu, 416 E. 59th St. 212-753-4444.
Through April 16.

GALLERIES–CHELSEA

JEAN-MICHEL BASQUIAT
This show, subtitled "In Word Only," contains paintings, drawings, and sketchbooks by the madly prolific artist, and they're all language, all the time. From jazz genealogies to comments on Northern Renaissance painting and the police, Basquiat's urgent block capitals and sometimes crowded, sometimes lonely layouts form a composite self-portrait, both riveting and self-indulgent. Through March 26. (Cheim & Read, 547 W. 25th St. 212-242-7727.)

ROB DE MAR
Landscapes for doll-house Valkyries, de Mar's sculptures include model pine trees, tiny rock outcroppings (some embellished with real fungi), and lacy nets of pale-blue or white flocked wire that simulate clouds, mist, or maybe the ether. One piece uses a loose, hanging bundle of fine-gauge metal rods to suggest heavy rain. De Mar's concatenations are suspended from the ceiling or attached on tensile wires to the wall, floating like unmoored islands in their own highly artificial atmospherics—the balance between kitsch and romanticism is just right. Through March 12. (Clementine, 526 W. 26th St. 212-243-5937.)

JUDY FOX
An allegorical quintet of life-sized figures cast in luminously painted resin enact a dream—or nightmare—of matriarchal power and vulnerability. Fox's zaftig Venus wears a helmetlike basket on her head and confronts four prepubescent boys—one African, one Asian, one Caucasian, and one Arab or Semitic. Each child wears a headdress (if you count the blond boy's curls) and gestures cryptically at the woman, who could be genuflecting or conducting. A tableau of global aggression? Oedipal drama writ large? Either way, the spooky fleshiness of Fox's material keeps the objects interesting. Through March 12. (P.P.O.W., 555 W. 25th St. 212-647-1044.)

AMY GLOBUS
One problem with making art about animals is that the animals are often so interesting in and of them-

www.ellentracy.com [illegible]
ELLEN TRACY

selves that artistic overlay seems superfluous. Globus has done a nice job, though, in her first solo show, of working with the blob of grotesque loveliness that is the octopus. In the dark gallery, a haunting video shows the sinuous movements of the beast as it squeezes through a glass tube; its translucent body appears to be made of live, lithe gold, and its muscular contortions are unnerving. Three somewhat less dramatic sculptures are made from or patterned after the tubular tanks used in the film, encrusted with sharp salt crystals, glitter, and sand. Through March 26. (D'Amelio Terras, 525 W. 22nd St. 212-352-9460.)

DAMIEN HIRST
A show of recent paintings entitled "The Elusive Truth." Opens March 11. (Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 212-741-1111.)

SARAH LUCAS
The bad-girl sculptor Lucas constructs naughty totems from nylon stockings, metal housewares, and naked light bulbs. A heavy, old-fashioned bed frame leans against a cinder-block wall, stockings dangling limply from its springs; twin lights droop from a clothes hanger above another light tucked in a bucket, miming breasts and a belly. Stockings stretched from shoes cast in concrete and suspenders hooked over a coat hanger also serve as punny shorthand for the human figure. There's plenty of wit on display (including the show's title, "God Is Dad"), but the assemblages start to have a tired, mannered feel. Through March 14. (Gladstone, 515 W. 24th St. 212-206-9300.)

SARAH MORRIS
The producer Robert Evans gets a shave from his topless girlfriend; a stogie-smoking Dennis Hopper cruises studio back lots; a camera looks down on celebrities working the red carpet; rehearsals for last year's Oscars are broken up with jokey interludes. Morris's film (set to a Philip Glass-lite score by her husband, the artist Liam Gillick) is titled "Los Angeles," as if Hollywood were the only filter through which to view the metropolis; and, aside from shots that mirror the orthogonals in her paintings, her vision of the city is single-faceted. She follows in the footsteps of Jane and Louise Wilson, bringing a camera into private chambers of power, but, unlike the English twins, she doesn't make the case for having been there in the first place. Through March 26. (Petzel, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-680-9467.)

RUDOLF STINGEL
The artist who cozied up Grand Central with a loud floral carpet goes minimal with a "There's no there there" installation. Stingel gives a subtle tweak to the white cube by covering the polished concrete floor with slabs of particleboard painted stark white. Over the course of the exhibition, the false floor will get scuffed and grubby as viewers tread their own collaborative abstraction across its pristine expanse. Presiding over this charged nothing is Stingel's enormous black-and-white painting of his longtime dealer Paula Cooper, based on a 1984 Mapplethorpe portrait. Through March 12. (Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 212-255-1105.)

"LOGICAL CONCLUSIONS: 40 YEARS OF RULE-BASED ART"
In size and scale and quality, "Logical Conclusions" is like a small museum show, minus the admission fee. The best inclusions follow the title thesis closely and fall in the first half of those forty years: a Manzoni monochrome, an Albers square, Ed Ruscha's exhaustive photo-documentation of "Every Building on the Sunset Strip," On Kawara date paintings, the Bechers' photographic grid of gas tanks. John Baldessari's video, in which he sings the rules that Sol LeWitt laid down for himself, is a perverse sendup of rule-based art, but it's a perfect complement to the LeWitt modular sculpture a few feet away. Through April 2. (Pace Wildenstein, 534 W. 25th St. 212-421-3292.)

Short List

PETAH COYNE
Lelong, 528 W. 26th St. 212-315-0470.
Through March 16.

ERIC FISCHL
Mary Boone, 541 W. 24th St. 212-752-2929.
Through April 23.

KIT WHITE
Zarre, 529 W. 20th St. 212-255-0202.
Through March 19.

"WOMEN ON THE VERGE"
Kagan, 540 W. 29th St. 212-560-0670. Through March 12.

PHOTOGRAPHY

LISA KERESZI
These color photographs of a recent New York City mostly depict a place that is just out of reach. A chalkboard from an abandoned classroom on Governors Island still has the teacher's name neatly printed across the slate. Other images conjure up the same fractured, even seedy past, from the Show World sign to Coney Island's Wonder Wheel glowing, in double, against a night sky. Also on view is the ethereal début solo show by the talented Jodie Vicenta Jacobson. Through March 26. (Richardson, 535 W. 22nd St. 646-230-9610.)

"Herbertus von Löwenstein," circa 1930, by Fritz Eschen, at the Neue Gallerie.

IMRE KINSZKI
This is a fascinating show of mostly tiny vintage photographs by Kinszki, a native of Budapest who was born in 1901 and killed at the Sachsenhausen concentration camp in 1945. Kinszki had a pitch-perfect modernist sensibility, and his work—in which much is made of shadows on sidewalks and crazy angles—is a very welcome addition to the canon. Through March 26. (Klotz/Sirmon, 511 W. 25th St. 212-741-4764.)

CHARLES H. TRAUB
The visual ironies of a few of these color photographs are so obvious, and sometimes so silly, that you wonder if you've missed something. In one, a woman seated at a conference table, her arm resting atop her head, shares an office moment with a male colleague while a model in an underwear ad on the wall behind her strikes the same pose. Other photographs, though, such as those of a blue wading pool, which completely fills the tiny courtyard of a soulless yellow brick apartment building; a regimental alignment of pigeons peering over the edge of a rooftop; and a mother-son team of tourists resting in Pompeii, both in red sweaters, venture into an amusing absurdism. Through April 2. (Gitterman, 170 E. 75th St. 212-734-0868.)

"(PEOPLE) IN SERIES, IN SEQUENCE"
The gallery has pulled together seminal work by six preëminent photographers: Diane Arbus, Harry Callahan, Philip-Lorca diCorcia, Robert Frank, Lee Friedlander, and Paul Strand. Every piece in the show is a beauty, and you'd be hard pressed to find so many examples of important photography in one place again. Through March 19. (Pace/MacGill, 52 E. 57th St. 212-759-8964.)

Short List

LISETTE MODEL
Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St. 212-627-4819.
Through March 19.

TINA MODOTTI / EDWARD WESTON
Throckmorton, 145 E. 57th St. 212-223-1059.
Through March 12.

JACK PIERSON
Danziger, 521 W. 26th St. 212-629-6778.
Through March 19.

RICO PUHLMANN
Fashion Institute of Technology, Seventh Ave. at 27th St. 212-217-5800. Through April 9.

HERB RITTS
Staley-Wise, 560 Broadway. 212-966-6223.
Through March 19.

STEPHEN SHORE
Houk, 745 Fifth Ave. 212-750-7070.
Opens March 8.

"PORTRAITS OF AN AGE"
Neue Gallerie, 1048 Fifth Ave. 212-628-6200.
Opens March 11.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S
March 10 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: An impressive cache of bronze animal sculptures by Rembrandt Bugatti leads off a sale of twentieth-century decorative art

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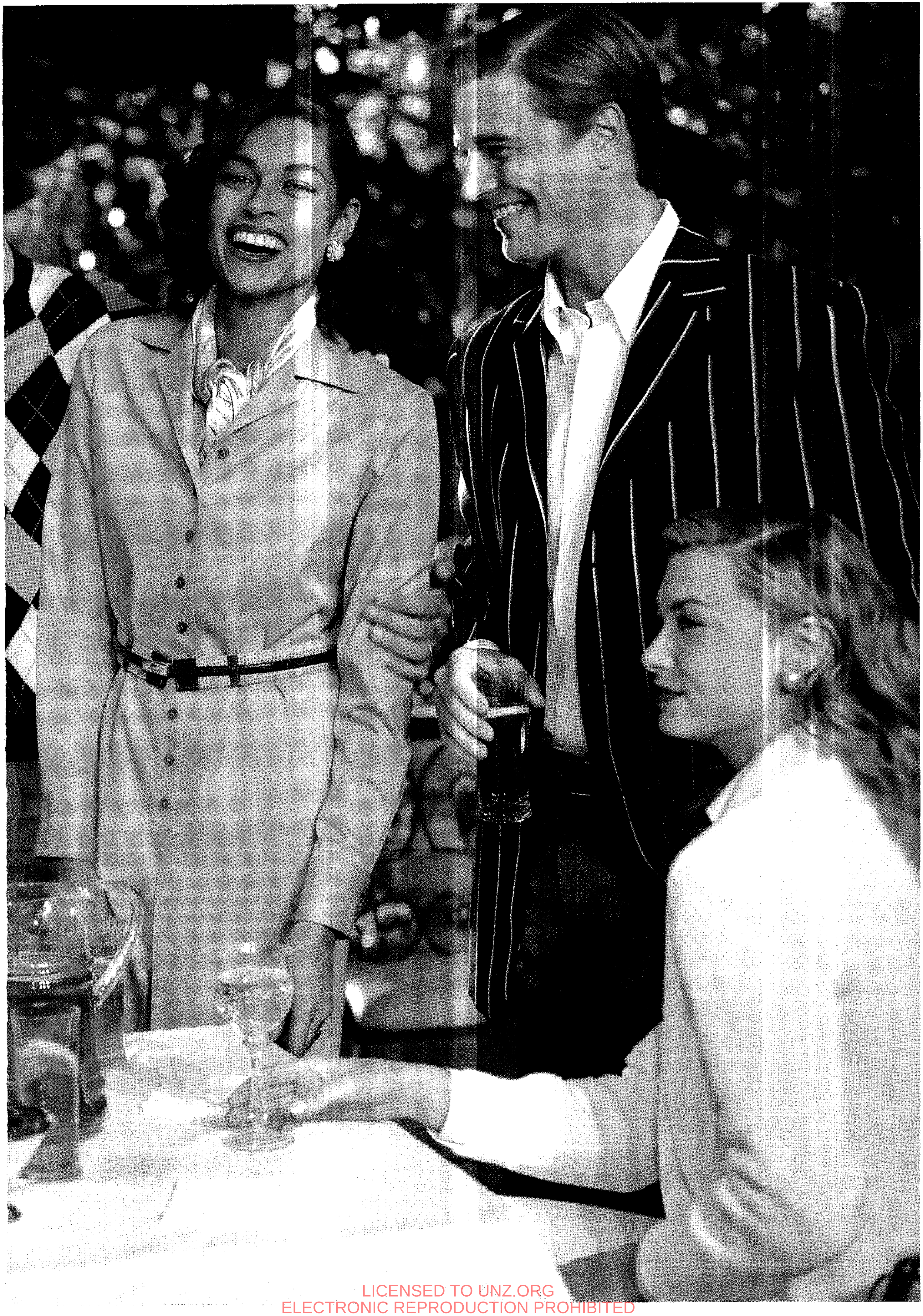

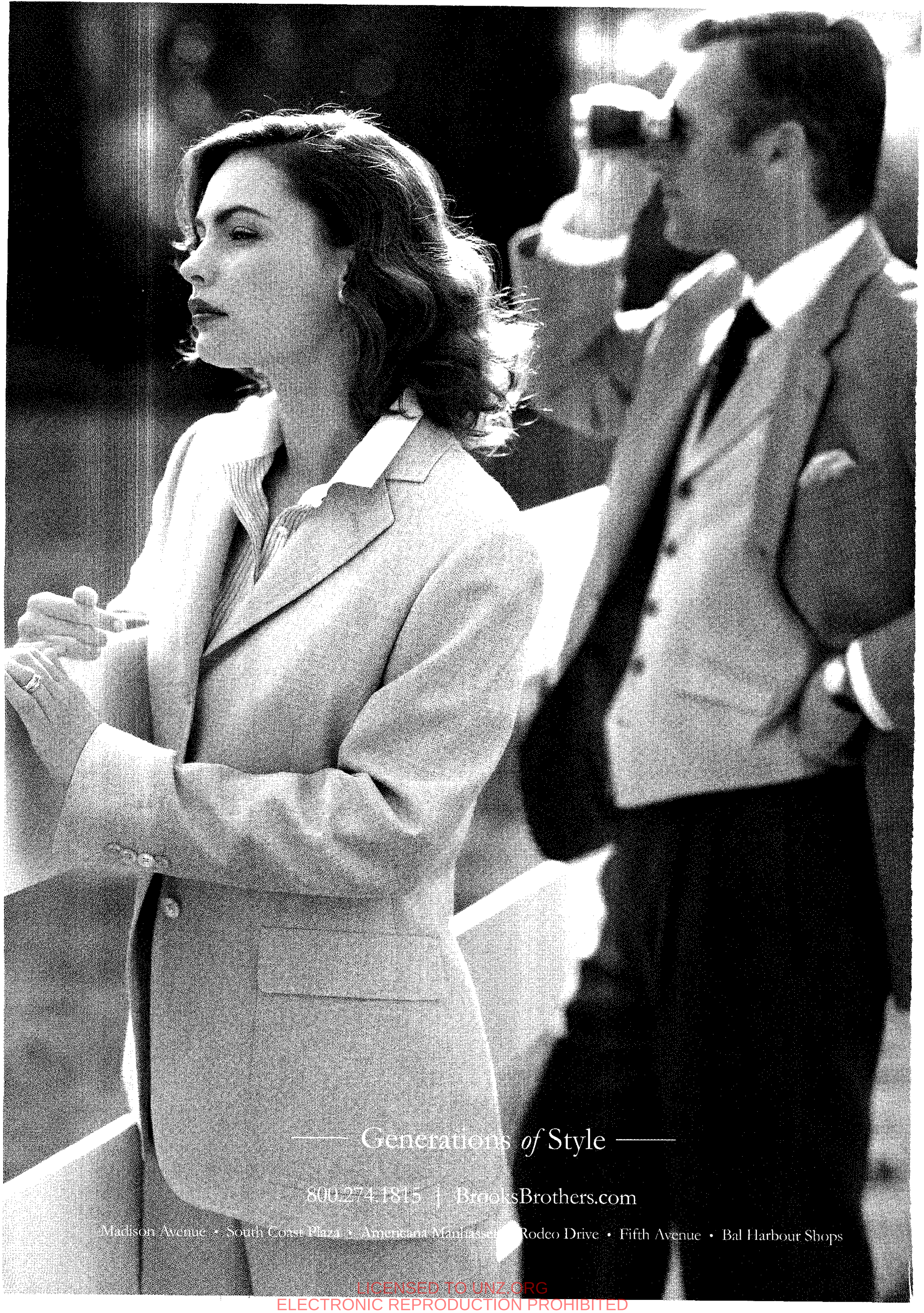
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works, mostly from the collection of Cecile Singer. ♦ March 15 at 10:15 A.M.: Most of the artists represented in this auction of Israeli and international art were born in Europe and emigrated to Palestine shortly before or after the Second World War. Their visions—executed in a panoply of late-nineteenth- and twentieth-century styles—reflect the colors, shapes, and conflicts of the region. Of the younger, Israeli-born artists, the works of Adi Nes stand out: his staged, digitally manipulated photographs of Israeli soldiers are subtly disturbing treatments of images from military and art history, tinged with a strangely wholesome homoerotic glamour. The auction, which includes works by Chagall, Reuven Rubin, Mordecai Ardon, Yosef Zarisky, Michal Rovner, and Avigdor Arikha, is a linchpin of Israeli Contemporary Art Week in New York, an extensive series of events and shows. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S
March 9 at 10 A.M.: This sale of twentieth-century decorative art and design focusses on the sixties and seventies, a time of experimentation in the studio as much as anywhere else. Paul Evans's sculpted aluminum-and-cowhide armchair, for instance, has the back of a space capsule and the webbed feet of a platypus; John Dickinson's white painted table, which is expected to fetch as much as fifty thousand dollars, has legs that end in four plaster paws. Two elegant vases—"Rostrato," a glass work by Ercole Barovier from 1938, and a glazed ceramic vase by Charles Catteau from 1920—lend a classic touch to the proceedings. ♦ March 15 at 10 A.M.: The scope of "First Open," a new sale of postwar and contemporary art offered at moderate prices, incorporates both Andy Warhol's painted-steel "Bomb" (1967), a fetishistic image of destruction, and the cold simplicity of Mark Tansey's "Cave Painting" (1986), which could almost be a vision of a post-apocalyptic world. The auction also includes works by Haring, Calder, and Dirk Skreber ("Untitled," from 1991). (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)

SWANN
March 10 at 10:30 A.M.: A day devoted to prints and drawings begins with a sale of American art from the collection of James Heald, with works by Rauschenberg ("Visitation II," a lithograph), Kent ("Charlotte," a rare female nude), and Bellows prominent among them. ♦ March 10 at 11:30 A.M. and 2:30: Not surprisingly, Picasso, Chagall, and Miró reign supreme in a wide-ranging auction of prints and drawings from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. (104 E. 25th St. 212-254-4710.)

THE ARMORY SHOW '05
The international fair of new art gets under way at Piers 90 and 92, with art works offered by more than a hundred and sixty galleries from three continents. Special events and talks, offered in collaboration with eight museums and four concurrent exhibitions (including Art Rock and Israeli Contemporary Art Week), abound; for more information, see www.thearmoryshow.com. (Twelfth Ave. between 50th and 52nd Sts. 212-645-6440. March 11-14.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
March 9 at 8 and March 12 at 1:30: **"Il Barbiere di Siviglia,"** with Franco Vassallo (as Figaro), Katarina Karnéus, Matthew Polenzani, Carlos Chausson, and Ferruccio Furlanetto; Maurizio Benini conducts. ♦ March 10 and March 14 at 7: The conductor Fabio Luisi is making his Met début in a revival of **"Don Carlo"** (in the John Dexter production), for many Verdi's richest and most penetrating score. The cast includes Sondra Radvanovsky, Violeta Urmana, Richard Margison, Dwayne Croft, Furlanetto, and Samuel Ramey (an imposing King Philip of seasons past, now taking the role of the Grand Inquisitor). ♦ March 11 and March 15 at 7:30: Nathaniel Merrill's sumptuous production of **"Der Rosenkavalier,"** a favorite at the Met since it first arrived in the 1968-69 season, returns with Angela Denoke, a lissome German soprano who projects vulnerability more easily than grandeur. She makes her Met début as the Marschallin, a role previously inhabited by such formidable performers as Schwarzkopf, Crespin, and Rysanek. Also with Laura Aikin (a new Sophie), Susan Graham (a masterly Octavian), Peter Rose, Håkan Hagegård, and Giuseppe Sabbatini; Donald Runnicles conducts. ♦ March 12 at 8: The sturdy voices of José Cura and Denyce Graves propel a fine revival of **"Samson et Dalila,"** an opera the Met has been presenting faithfully for a hundred and ten years. Bertrand de Billy's conducting gives the music lightness, speed, and proportion—everything French, that is. (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA
The Hal Prince production of **"Candide,"** Leonard Bernstein's rollicking treatment of Voltaire, returns to open the company's spring season with two Broadway stars—Judy Kaye and John Cullum—in the character roles of the Old Lady and Pangloss and two pairs of up-and-coming City Opera singers as the tempest-tossed young lovers. George Manahan conducts. March 9 at 7:30 and March 11-12 at 8: With Anna Christy and Keith Jameson as Cunegonde and Candide. ♦ March 12 at 1:30: With Georgia Jarman and William Ferguson replacing Christy and Jameson. ♦ March 13 at 1:30: Lori Phillips, a Turandot of note at the house, takes the title role in a revival of **"Madama Butterfly,"** adding some heft to Mark Lamos's lovely production, a floating world of pastel blue. Also with Jennifer Hines, Gerard Powers, and John Packard; Steven Mosteller conducts. (New York State Theatre. 212-870-5570.)

AMATO OPERA
The little opera company that could is a mix of aspiring professionals and hearty amateurs; it offers a new production of **"The Merry Widow,"** under the direction of Anthony Amato. (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 212-228-8200. March 11-12 at 7:30 and March 13 at 2:30.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Lorin Maazel's latest offering, a clear-the-decks program of German postmodernism (the world première of Wolfgang Rihm's "Two Other Movements"), Austrian classicism (Haydn's noble Symphony No. 95), and French romance (Chausson's "Poème," Saint-Saëns's "Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso," and Ravel's "Boléro"), features the Philharmonic début of the young Georgian violinist Lisa Batiashvili. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656. March 10 and March 15 at 7:30, March 11 at 11 A.M., and March 12 at 8.)

OSLO PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA
André Previn brings his new orchestra to Carnegie Hall for the first time. March 9 at 8: The centerpiece of Previn's first concert is his own Violin Concerto, a fluent essay in Korngold-style late Romanticism designed for his wife, Anne-Sophie Mutter, who will perform it alongside works by Debussy (the "Prélude à l'Après-Midi d'un Faune") and Strauss (the "Symphonia Domestica"). ♦ March 10 at 8: A nearly all-Ravel program— "Alborada del Gracioso," the "Daphnis et Chloé" Suite No. 2, and "Shéhérazade" (with the mezzo-soprano Denyce Graves)—is interrupted by Gershwin's "Concerto in F," featuring Previn himself as piano soloist. (212-247-7800.)

AMERICAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Leon Botstein conducts a concert of symphonic works, culled from the far corners of the repertoire, inspired by the storyteller Hans Christian Andersen (see This Week). (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5030. March 11 at 8.)

VIENNA PHILHARMONIC
Mariss Jansons, renowned for conducting muscular renditions of works from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, leads the magnificent ensemble in its annual Carnegie Hall residency. March 11 at 8: Symphonies by Beethoven (No. 2, in D Major) and Shostakovich (the Fifth). ♦ March 12 at 8: The First Symphonies of Sibelius and Brahms. ♦ March 13 at 2: Schoenberg's "Verklärte Nacht" and Mahler's Symphony No. 1 in D Major. (212-247-7800.)

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PAULA ROBISON: "THE GREAT VIVALDI"
The noted flutist, paying tribute to the musical priest of Venice, teams up with a chamber orchestra to offer a program of concertos (including "La Pastorella" and "L'Amoroso") and arrangements of Venetian songs at the Temple of Dendur. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 212-570-3949. March 12 at 7.)

VOX VOCAL ENSEMBLE: BYRD'S "GREAT SERVICE"
George Steel takes a break from programming the new and unusual at Miller Theatre to lead his chorus in Byrd's masterwork, one of the glories of Anglican church music, in the nave of Riverside Church. Sacred works by some of Byrd's forebears and followers—including Tallis, Parsons, and Weelkes—complete the program. (Riverside Dr. at 120th St. 212-854-7799. March 12 at 8.)

EARLY MUSIC NEW YORK
Frederick Renz conducts his period-instrument orchestra (featuring the harpsichordist Bradley Brookshire) in a concert of concertos and orchestral suites by Bach. (St. James's Church, Madison Ave. at 71st St. 212-280-0330. March 12 at 8.)

ORCHESTRA OF THE S.E.M. ENSEMBLE
Petr Kotik conducts his downtown orchestra, now thirty-five years old, in a piquant program of the old and new: music by Rameau (a suite from "Les Indes Galantes"), Webern (the gemlike Symphony, Op. 21), Feldman, Alvin Lucier (a world première), and himself. (Zankel Hall. 212-247-7800. March 14 at 7:30.)

RECITALS

"ON WINGS OF SONG"
The Marilyn Horne Foundation's latest concert pairs the tenor Garrett Sorenson, a recent graduate of the Met's Lindemann Young Artist Development program, with the pianist Craig Terry in songs by Rachmaninoff, Vaughan Williams, and Liszt. (St. Bartholomew's Church, Park Ave. at 51st St. 212-378-0248. March 9 at 6:30.)

ROULETTE: GINA LEISHMAN
In "The Poetics of No Piano," a concert that kicks off the downtown collective's latest performance series, the composer and cabaret singer sets words by some favorite poets (Brecht, Shakespeare, Sitwell) while accompanying herself on an accordion, a ukulele, or a set of glasses—anything but a piano. (Location One, 20 Greene St. 212-219-8242. March 9 at 8:30. For a full schedule, see www.roulette.org.)

BARGEMUSIC
March 10-11 at 7:30: Dmitri Alexeev, a distinguished Russian pianist in the grand manner, offers sonatas by Beethoven (the Sonata No. 5, Op. 10, and the commanding final sonata, No. 32) and Rachmaninoff (the Sonata No. 2 in B-Flat Minor). ♦ March 12 at 7:30 and March 13 at 4: Alexeev joins the violinist Mark Peskanov, the violist Nicholas Cords, and the cellist Eric Jacobson for piano quartets by Beethoven and Brahms (in G Minor, Op. 26). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

NEW YORK PHILOMUSICA
Four of the group's core players offer the kind of inviting program that string quartets should offer regularly: the final works in the genre by Schubert (the towering Quartet No. 15 in G Major) and by his twentieth-century disciple Britten (the painfully intimate Quartet No. 3), along with a contemporary work (Michael Berkeley's "Quartet Study"). (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. March 10 at 8.)

"RELÂCHE UPTOWN"
Philadelphia's "downtown"-style ensemble comes to New York to celebrate its twenty-fifth anniversary season, offering a slate of new and recent works by John King, Amy Denio, Leslie Burrs, and Shafer Mahoney ("Lydian Variations"). (Thalia Theatre, Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. March 11 at 8:30.)

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC CHAMBER MUSIC
Jean-Yves Thibaudet joins first-desk members of the orchestra (including the oboist Joseph Robinson and the bassoonist Judith LeClair) in a dashing program of works by Haydn, Poulenc (the Sextet for Piano and Winds), Ligeti (the Six Bagatelles for Wind Quintet), and Dohnányi. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. March 13 at 3.)

GUARNERI STRING QUARTET
The Schneider Concerts series offers a chance to hear the eminent group, at an affordable price, in quartets by Mozart, Ravel, and the underrated British master Frank Bridge. (Tishman Auditorium, New School University, 66 W. 12th St. 212-243-9937. March 13 at 3.)

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER
An impressive group of young and seasoned musicians—including the pianist Gilbert Kalish, the harpist Nancy Allen, the mezzo-soprano Mary Nessinger, and the Pacifica Quartet—gather to perform two beloved works by George Crumb ("Ancient Voices of Children" and the string quartet "Black Angels") and two others by Osvaldo Golijov, Crumb's former student at the University of Pennsylvania, who has gone on to win a following of his own. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-875-5788. March 13 at 5.)

JUPITER SYMPHONY CHAMBER PLAYERS
The Jens Nygaard tribute ensemble, continuing their founder's penchant for back-of-the-shelf repertoire, offers doleful Russian masterworks by Rachmaninoff (the Piano Trio No. 1 in G Minor) and Arensky (the String Quartet in A Minor, for violin, viola, and two cellos) along with bonbons by Prokofiev, Glinka, and Markevitch. (Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 152 W. 66th St. 212-799-1259. March 14 at 2 and 7:30.)

TACTUS: "DOUBLE FEATURE"
Patti Monson, director of the group (the Manhattan School of Music's contemporary music ensemble) and the flutist of choice for many of New York's most innovative composers, coördinates two concerts. March 14 at 6: A selection of works by Webern. ♦ March 14 at 8: Music by Steve Reich ("Proverb," for singers, vibraphones, and electric organs), Julia Wolfe, and Martin Bresnick ("Der Signal," a Yiddish translation of a Russian children's tale set for narrator, singers, shadow puppets, and instrumental ensemble). (Borden Auditorium, Broadway at 122nd St. No tickets required.)

ANTHONY DE MARE: "GOTHAM GLORY"
The compelling American pianist, known for his theatricality, his advocacy of new music, and his bodybuilder's physique, comes to Zankel Hall to offer world-première works by David Del Tredici, Paul Moravec, Fred Hersch, and Jason Robert Brown, along with Monk's "Gotham Lullaby" and Rzewski's "De Profundis" (written for de Mare), a work for pianist/reciter based on Wilde's memoir of imprisonment. (212-247-7800. March 15 at 7:30.)

CLASSICAL NOTES

BARBER SHOP
If any Samuel Barber work has inspired near-universal approval, it is the Sonata for Piano, composed for Vladimir Horowitz, who premièred it in 1949. One of the miracles of this piece, and of Barber's music generally, is how an unlikely amalgam of materials—Schoenbergian tone rows, Bach-like counterpoint, bravura piano writing out of Rachmaninoff, joyful riffs of Gershwin-style jazz—coheres into a convincing whole. Reverently European in influence, it is defiantly American in style. Horowitz's arch-Romantic recording set the standard, a tradition continued in a more patient, rounded manner by Diane Walsh, on a recent disk from the Bridge label. Marc-André Hamelin's new recording on Hyperion, however, is a dazzling alternative: others may stress the work's intense lyricism, but Hamelin emphasizes its jutting angles, propulsive rhythms, and striking architecture. It holds its own against Ives's "ultra-modern" "Concord" Sonata, in a provocative but inevitable pairing.

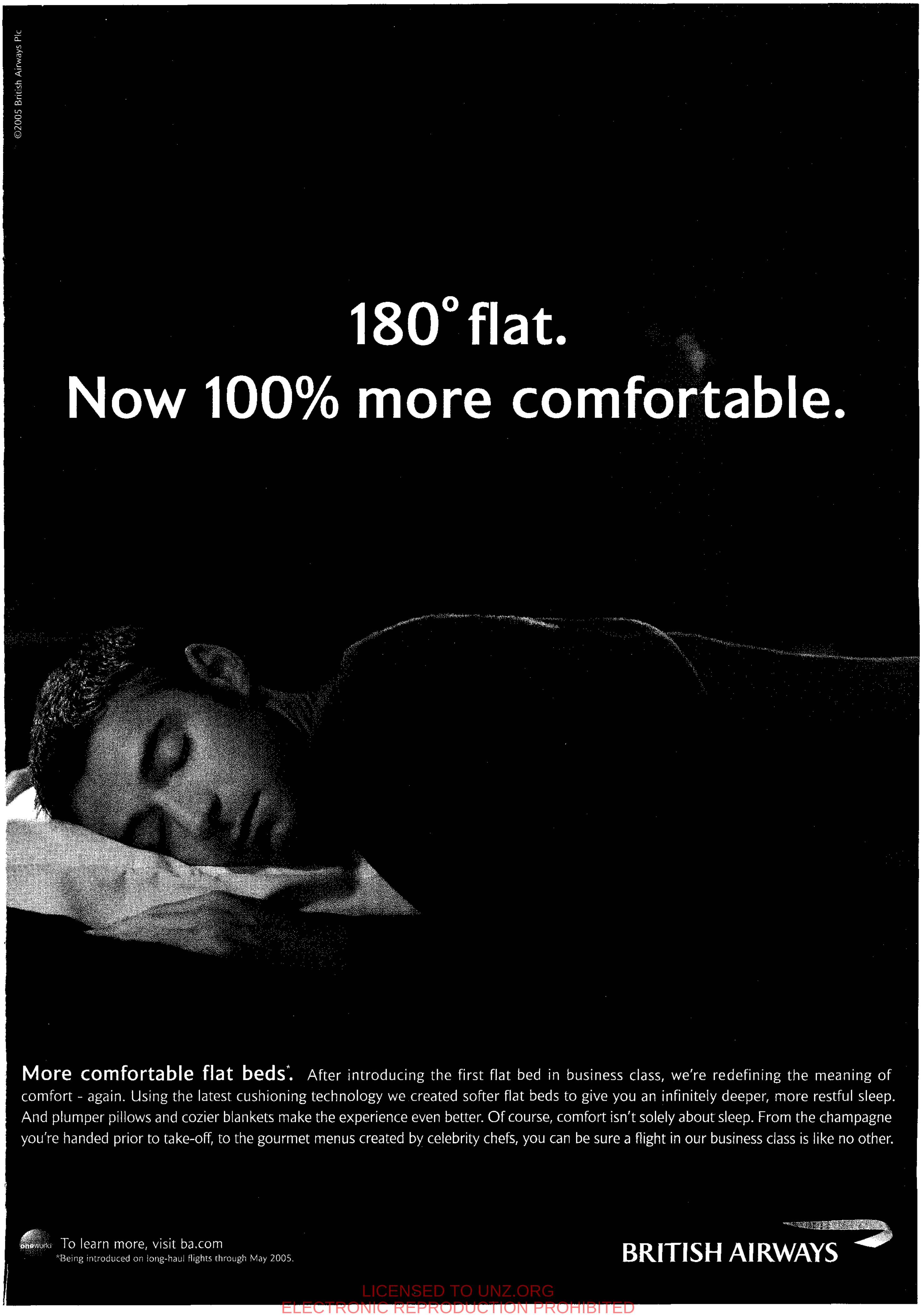
Bridge has performed another valuable service in releasing a disk that couples Leontyne Price's historic 1953 recital at the Library of Congress—which, with Barber at the piano, includes the world-première performance of the beloved "Hermit Songs"—with a 1938 radio broadcast of Barber accompanying himself at the keyboard in a selection of folk songs and German lieder. His elegantly clipped Main Line accent and purling baritone voice help explain the aristocratic milieu of "Vanessa" (1958), his successful first opera, in which an aging beauty waits in vain for the dashing lover of her youth. For sheer style, the legendary RCA recording, in which Dimitri Mitropoulos conducted the Metropolitan Opera cast (which included Eleanor Steber, Rosalind Elias, and Nicolai Gedda), will never be equalled. But Leonard Slatkin's new disk, on Chandos, features an impressive contemporary cast—headed by Christine Brewer, Susan Graham, and William Burden—and a sharp performance from the excellent BBC Symphony Orchestra that underlines the sometimes hysterical emotions beneath Barber's sumptuous sounds.

—*Russell Platt*

ABOVE AND BEYOND

READINGS
March 9 at 8: The Happy Ending Music and Reading Series presents stories about insomnia and late-night activities, with Kevin Sampsell, Dan Kennedy, Jonathan Ames, and Jeff Johnson. The music will be provided by One Ring Zero. (Happy Ending Bar, 302 Broome St. 212-334-9676.) ♦ March 14 at 7: Kinky Friedman reads from his new mystery, "Ten Little New Yorkers." (Barnes & Noble, Sixth Ave. at 21st St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ March 10 at 7:30: The poets Irving Feldman, Jack Gilbert, Maxine Kumin, and Gary Snyder read from their work. (New School, 66 W. 12th St. For more information, call 212-254-9628.) ♦ March 14 at 8: Mary Gordon and Marilynne Robinson read from their latest novels. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500.) ♦ March 15 at 7: Elizabeth Gaffney offers selections from her novel, "Metropolis." (BookCourt, 163 Court St., Brooklyn. No tickets necessary.)

TALKS
March 10 at 8: Matthieu Ricard, a photographer and Buddhist monk, discusses his new exhibition, in which he documents life in the Himalayas, which recently went on view at the Rubin Museum of Art. (150 W. 17th St. 212-620-5000.) ♦ March 12 at 11 A.M.: The shark researcher Hans Walters discusses his work. (New York Aquarium, Surf Ave. at W. 8th St., Brooklyn. 718-265-3474.) ♦ March 12 at 2: Lisa Dierbeck talks about her novel "One Pill Makes You Smaller," which sets "Alice in Wonderland" in nineteen-seventies America. (Brooklyn Public Library, Grand Army Plaza, Brooklyn. No tickets necessary.) ♦ March 13 at 5: Nelson Vieira, a professor of Brazilian literature at Brown University, joins the translator Gregory Rabassa for a program on the life and work of the late Brazilian novelist Clarice Lispector, whom some have called "the Kafka of Latin-American literature." (Center for Jewish History, 15 W. 16th St. 212-294-8301.) ♦ March 14 at 4: Frederick Seitz, the former president of Rockefeller University, and William T. Golden, who was once the science advisor to President Truman, reminisce about their old friend Albert Einstein, on what would have been his hundred-and-twenty-sixth birthday. Later that day, at 6, the theoretical physicist Lawrence M. Krauss lectures on "Einstein's Greatest Blunder," which involves empty space, energy, and the future of the universe. (Graduate Center, City University of New York, Fifth Ave. at 34th St. For more information, call 212-817-8215.)



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BRITISH AIRWAYS

MOVIES OPENING

THE BOYS & GIRL FROM COUNTY CLARE
In John Irvin's drama, three estranged Irish brothers compete against each other in a ceilidh competition. With Colm Meaney, Bernard Hill, Patrick Bergin, and Andrea Corr. Opening March 11.

DON'T MOVE
Sergio Castellitto directed this film, in which he plays a doctor who has an affair with a hotel maid (Penelope Cruz). In Italian. Opening March 11. (Sunshine Cinema.)

HOSTAGE
A thriller with Bruce Willis as a washed-up hostage negotiator who gets involved in a convenience-store robbery. Directed by Florent Emilio Siri. Opening March 11.

IN MY COUNTRY
Samuel L. Jackson plays a reporter covering the Truth and Reconciliation Committee in South Africa, in a drama directed by John Boorman. With Juliette Binoche. Opening March 11.

MAIL ORDER WIFE
Huck Botko and Andrew Gurland's mock documentary about a heavyset doorman from Queens who chooses a bride from overseas. Opening March 11.

MILLIONS
Danny Boyle ("28 Days Later") directed this drama, in which two young boys, still reeling from the death of their mother, discover a suitcase full of money. Opening March 11.

ROBOTS
An animated movie directed by Chris Wedge and Carlos Saldanha ("Ice Age"), about the adventures of a talented robot inventor. With the voices of Ewan McGregor, Halle Berry, Greg Kinnear, Mel Brooks, and others. Opening March 11.

THE UPSIDE OF ANGER
In a drama written and directed by Mike Binder, Joan Allen plays a single mother of four girls who gets involved with the ex-baseball star (Kevin Costner) next door. The cast includes Evan Rachel Wood, Erika Christensen, Alicia Witt, and Keri Russell. Opening March 11.

SOUND
SCENE
TAKE
1
2
3
PROD
Etc...

FILM NOTES

THE AVIATOR
The billionaire madman, the taloned hermit of Las Vegas eating nothing but steak and peas—that was the haggard face in the tabloids that millions of us knew in the years before Howard Hughes's death, in 1976. Martin Scorsese's brilliantly entertaining movie goes back to the period when Hughes (Leonardo DiCaprio) was an exhilaratingly handsome and daring young man. The narrative, concocted by the screenwriter John Logan, is not meant to be taken literally. It's a fantasia about a studly capitalist prince who produces and directs movies, designs and flies airplanes, and sleeps with dozens of beautiful actresses and starlets. Scorsese and the designer Dante Ferretti press the young tycoon into the svelte Art Deco look of the period; in his tuxedos and casual beige flying duds, Hughes becomes the pictorial embodiment of restless bravado. Toward the end, there are glimpses of the germ-haunted paranoid that Hughes would become, but the movie is consistently lighthearted and engaging, a sort of pop "Citizen Kane." With Cate Blanchett doing a nervy imitation of Katharine Hepburn, Alec Baldwin as Hughes's rival, and Alan Alda as the corrupt Maine senator Owen Brewster.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 12/20 & 27/04.) (Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 1, East 86th Street Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

BE COOL
It's too slovenly to be cool. This sequel to the heavenly "Get Shorty," one of the best American movies from the mid-nineties, brings back the black-suited ex-loan shark Chili Palmer (John Travolta), who, after becoming a Hollywood producer in the original, decides to take on the Los Angeles music business. Chili and a record-executive friend (Uma Thurman) try to wrest the contract of a hot young singer (Christina Milian) away from her falling-into-the-gutter managers (Harvey Keitel and Vince Vaughn). They travel around pop L.A.—dropping in on clubs, visiting the Lakers at the Staples Center, where they encounter Steven Tyler, of Aerosmith. The movie feels like a show-business tour. "Get Shorty" was a satirical love letter to a corrupt milieu, but this sequel says that the music business is about money and nothing else, so the love drops out of the comedy, which descends from satire to burlesque. Vaughn, however, is consistently funny as Raji, who wants to be black and keeps thumping his chest and delivering such locutions as "Stop hating, start participating. C'mon, twinkle, twinkle, baby." Directed, lamely, by F. Gary Gray. From an Elmore Leonard novel.—*D.D.* (3/7/05) (Battery Park 11, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

BEING JULIA
It's easy to forget about the talent of Annette Bening—she makes a movie and then disappears for a while to take care of the Beatty clan (four children, plus Warren). Those who seek out this film can revel once again in her actorly grace. It's a thirties period piece, in which Bening plays a limelight-loving stage actress who is having an affair with a selfish youth (Shaun Evans). Jeremy Irons shines in the role of her stage-manager husband, and the story, based on a Somerset Maugham novel, brims with sardonic humor. István Szabó's direction may lack the spark to awaken the story's true histrionics, but Bening delivers such juicy joie de vivre that the lacklustre camerawork hardly matters.—*Bruce Diones* (Battery Park 11, Quad Cinema, 72nd Street East, and 62nd & Broadway.)

BORN INTO BROTHELS
Watching Zana Briski and Ross Kauffman's prize-winning documentary, shot in Calcutta's Sonagachi red-light district, where Briski lived, on and off, for years, one is initially held by the sensuousness of the colors and the beauty of the children—the offspring of prostitutes, eight, nine, twelve years old, who are growing up in the district and are surely heading into prostitution themselves. Then the "plot" of the movie kicks in. Briski gives the children cameras and teaches them to take pictures of their surroundings; they gain a sense of themselves, and they master a craft. But will Briski be able to get them out of the brothels (where their parents need them for economic reasons) and into decent schools? One is aware of Briski as a rather aggressive guardian angel from the West, who comes in and tries to save only a few children, but she's hardheaded and effective, and her quest makes sense.—*D.D.* (Chelsea Cinemas, Metro Twin, and Village East Cinemas.)

BRIDE AND PREJUDICE
Ridiculous, but immensely enjoyable. Jane Austen's most enduringly popular story done as a Bollywood musical comedy, with Martin Henderson as Darcy, a callow American millionaire, and the ravishing Aishwarya Rai as the smartly alert Elizabeth Bennet figure, known here as Lalita, one of four highly nubile daughters living in Amritsar. The ballroom scene is turned into a sprightly Bollywood production number; in the street bazaars, cross-dressers and goofy guys with turbans break into dance. It's a travesty, of course, but also an exuberant, good-hearted movie, and it won't corrupt you or Jane Austen. Directed by Gurinder Chadha.—*D.D.* (BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea West, 42nd Street E Walk, Paris, and Union Square.)

CONSTANTINE
Lucifer's minions are illegally "crossing over" to Earth and taking possession of human bodies in preparation for the arrival of the Devil's son, who will institute chaos in the world. Our only defense: Constantine, played by Keanu Reeves, whose body looks more streamlined than ever. A long time ago, Constantine attempted suicide but escaped the grip of Hell (he was dead for two minutes but revived), and now he owes God a favor or two. The Lord's servant performs exorcisms and sends the crossover devils back to their fiery home. As the apocalypse approaches, Reeves whispers his fears to Rachel Weisz's Los Angeles cop, and she whispers back. The movie is reverently quiet even as all Hell is (literally) breaking loose. There is an extraordinary amount of digital mess and violence—gucky melting flesh and many revelations, transformations, and immersions, as well as satanic rats and large cockroaches. Engineered (you can't really say directed) by Francis Lawrence.—*D.D.* (3/7/05) (Battery Park 11, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, Village Theatre VII, and Ziegfeld.)

DOWNFALL
The great Swiss-German actor Bruno Ganz gives a staggering performance as Adolf Hitler in this full-scale realist German production detailing the last ten days of the Third Reich. As the Red Army rampages through Berlin, Hitler and his staff have retreated to the bunker under the Reich Chancellery. They are all here—Himmler, Goebbels, Speer, the entire fascinating, loathsome crew of commanders, mad visionaries, and toadies (all brilliantly acted)—and, leading them still, a man so physically ill and constricted in movement that he looks like a broken-down puppet from a Bavarian travelling circus. The puppet comes to life, of course, in appalling self-pitying rants that are borderline funny. The entire movie teeters on the edge of sick comedy—in particular such scenes as the death of the Goebbels children, one by one, at the hands of their mother—and at times one longs for a coldly malicious ironist like Brecht or Fassbinder to come in and take over. The attempt to re-create Hitler in realistic terms has always been morally and imaginatively questionable—a compromise with the unspeakable that borders on complicity with it. Produced and written by Bernd Eichinger; directed by Oliver Hirschbiegel. In German.—*D.D.* (2/14 & 21/05) (Film Forum.)

FORT APACHE
Henry Fonda, as an imperious, wrongheaded lieutenant colonel whose men are massacred because they obey him; the John Ford film, set after the Civil War, never suggests that they should defy him, though he's practically a certifiable maniac. This is one of Ford's beautiful but irritating epic Westerns. The fights and dances and other big scenes are triumphs of staging, but the coy love interest (Shirley Temple and John Agar) and the Irish horseplay are infantile. And the whole picture is bathed in a special form of patriotic sentimentality: scenes are held so that we cannot fail to appreciate the beauty of the American past. Released in 1948.—*Pauline Kael* (Film Forum; March 15.)

GUNNER PALACE
In late 2003 and early 2004, the filmmakers Michael Tucker and Petra Epperlein hung out with the men and women of an American field-artillery unit in Baghdad and came back with this fragmentary but suggestive report. The movie has an

absurdist framework: the company is billeted in a former palace that had belonged to Saddam's son Uday, a building that looks like a gigantic, crumbling Miami Beach hotel, complete with swimming pool and putting green. At night, in scary raids, the soldiers break into the houses of suspected bombmakers and often find nothing. Mostly very young, they are baffled and frustrated by a situation in which they are received not (as they had been told) as liberators but essentially as occupiers. Their innocence is both touching and exasperating. What right does anyone have to be so uninformed? Bitter rap lyrics, sometimes sung straight into the camera, serve as the descendant of the acid rock that played throughout Vietnam movies.—*D.D.* (Angelika Film Center and Empire 25.)

HEAD ON

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Angelika Film Center.)

HITCH

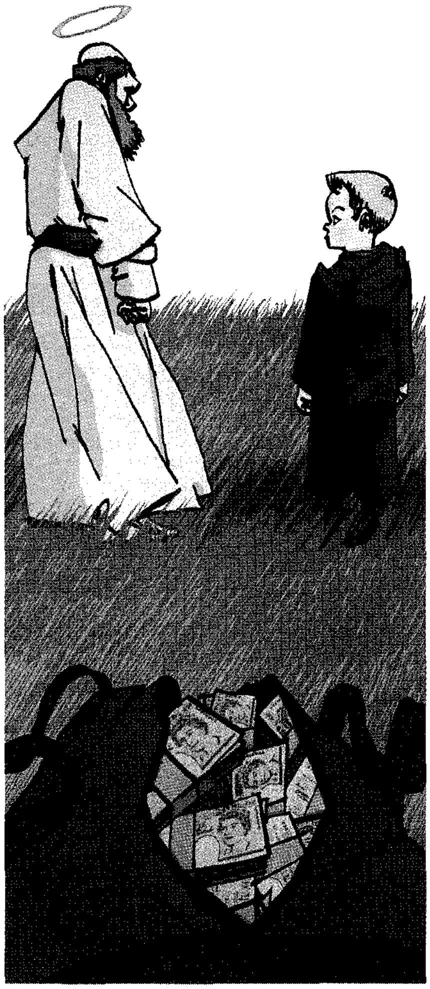
Smiling at a woman, his eyes crinkling, the actor Will Smith bears an uncanny resemblance to Bill Clinton. In this modern screwball comedy, Smith exerts his considerable charm as a swift, superknowing "date doctor" who advises men of less than extraordinary appearance how to woo the women of their dreams. Some of his advice is cornball stuff, and some of it narrowly practical and probably true (if she fiddles with her keys at her doorstep, she wants to be kissed). Smith's principal student is a heavyset accountant, played by the TV-comedy actor Kevin James, who is light on his feet in the tradition of such buoyant heavies as Zero Mostel and Jackie Gleason and possibly just as talented as those two. James's scenes with Smith and with Amber Valletta, who plays a bored heiress, are full of surprises. The movie is too long for what it has to say, but much of it is good-hearted fun. Stay for the dance sequence at the very end. Written by Kevin Bisch; directed by Andy Tennant.—*D.D.* (Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

HOTEL RWANDA

Paul Rusesabagina (Don Cheadle), the Rwandan manager of the four-star Hôtel des Mille Collines, in Kigali, wears a blue suit and tie and is very polite, even deferential, toward everyone. Paul works for the Belgian company that owns the hotel, which has become an oasis for Europeans and for African élites. When the Hutu massacres of the Tutsi minority begin, in the spring of 1994, Paul keeps the Mille Collines running. He also, on the sly, establishes it as a haven for both Hutu and Tutsi fugitives, keeping them momentarily safe from the machete-wielding militia, who kill eight hundred thousand people in a few months. Working in Rwanda and South Africa, the writer-director, Terry George, convincingly stages the horrors outside the hotel: the paralyzing fear in the night, the vilely inciting radio broadcasts, the chaos and arbitrary madness of the slaughter. But the true drama of "Hotel Rwanda" lies in the character of Paul, who is betrayed by the Europeans who formed him but who holds to his belief in civility, right through the worst disasters. The movie is a triumph for Cheadle—he never steps outside the character for emotional grandstanding or easy moralism.—*D.D.* (12/20 & 27/04) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and 19th Street East 6.)

IKIRU

Akira Kurosawa has too long been pegged as an artist of action and a maker of epics. The restoration of his 1952 picture, known in English as "To Live," should revive his reputation as a director who was not merely a movie master but also a virtuoso humanist. Here he uses multiple film and narrative techniques to dramatize, without tears, the plight of a dying city-government bureaucrat who looks for shreds of meaning in his family and profession. Kurosawa achieves the piercing emotions and poetry of the Italian neorealists by opposite means: he doesn't make the camera disappear. Instead, from the first view of the hero's X-rays, he deploys his camera so sharply and unerringly that it seems to take X-rays of the spirit. In Takashi Shimura, Kurosawa found an actor who could stand up to this close inspection. The crowning image of Shimura on a swing in a city park, crooning a song about life's brevity as the snow falls, comes as close as any big-screen moment to Joycean epiphany. In Japanese.—*Michael Sragow* (Moving Image; March 12-13.)



Opening March 11, "Millions," a moral fable directed by Danny Boyle.

JASHAR AWAN

INSIDE DEEP THROAT

An excitable documentary, directed by Fenton Bailey and Randy Barbato, about the creation of "Deep Throat." We follow that work through the stages of its writing and casting, both of which took hours to complete, and so to the more elaborate matter of its infamy. The star, Linda Lovelace, was no longer alive to be interviewed for the new film, but we hear from the director, a former hairdresser named Gerard Damiano, plus aging members of his crew, whose rants and ravings are twice as entertaining as anything in "Deep Throat" itself. Other contributors include such sexual magi as Dr. Ruth Westheimer, Camille Paglia, Erica Jong, and Helen Gurley Brown, all of whom lend weight and thrust to the documentary's contention that the erotic progress of America took a sharp upward turn in 1972. Certainly, the legal decision to shut down the original movie and to prosecute its hapless leading man, Harry Reems, was a foolishly obvious guarantee of its semi-mythical status; at no point, however, do Bailey and Barbato make even the barest attempt to undercut that myth, and their efforts rise, with climactic absurdity, to a defense of free expression so rousing that they might as well be discussing the "Madame Bovary" trial. This is an HBO production, so expect a glossy finish and a hopped-up editing style very different from the livid grunginess in which Ms. Lovelace and her friends were bathed.—*Anthony Lane* (2/28/05) (42nd Street E Walk and Sunshine Cinema.)

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

Michael Radford's film of "The Merchant of Venice" stars Al Pacino as Shylock, and the look of him—heavy of tread, eyes darting and wary—defines the encompassing mood. The text has been sliced and pared, and what remains is intimate and sorrowful, as if the characters knew from the start what manner of tribulation they would face. Antonio (Jeremy Irons) seems already to be mourning the loss not just of his ships at sea but of his friend Bassanio (Joseph Fiennes) to the wealthy and marriageable Portia (Lynn Collins). Her early scenes are the weakest in the movie, the comedy of the semi-fantastic sitting uneasily amid the gathering gloom. What Radford does best—and it's a trick he mislaid in the slower niceties of "Il Postino"—is to shove and wheedle the story along, so that the court scene and even the final bickering over wedding rings take on the air not merely of patchings-up but of bristling suspense. Much is at stake here, and, to judge by Pacino's burning gaze, the loser, in so villainous a society, is never really in doubt.—*A.L.* (1/3/05) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

MILLION DOLLAR BABY

Much of Clint Eastwood's evocative and poetic boxing movie is set in the Hit Pit, a moldy, sweat-stained downtown Los Angeles gym in which crusty veterans train a few serious fighters and many hapless punks. Scrap (Morgan Freeman), an ex-fighter with one functioning eye, works at the gym and exchanges affectionately nasty remarks with the owner, one Frankie Dunn (Eastwood). Against his better judgment, Frankie agrees to take on a tough country woman, Maggie Fitzgerald (Hilary Swank), who, not entirely to our surprise, rapidly becomes the hottest fighter in the sordid but lucrative world of women's boxing. The story, adapted by Paul Haggis from F. X. Toole's collection, "Rope Burns," is borderline trite, but the movie has the sweet melancholy of a great jazz piece.—*D.D.* (12/20 & 27/04) (Angelika Film Center, Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 1, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and 34th Street Theatre.)

THE NAKED SPUR

Anthony Mann's pictorially expansive, dramatically trim 1953 Western merges elements of "The Treasure of the Sierra Madre" and gangster movies. Instead of gold, there's a reward for the return of a fugitive (Robert Ryan). As his captors try to bring him back to Abilene through the Rockies, he uses psychology—and his innocent trailmate (Janet Leigh)—to divide and conquer them. James Stewart plays the obsessed leader; he needs the bounty to regain his ranch. Ralph Meeker is a volatile ex-soldier and Millard Mitchell (a cross between Walter Huston and Walter Brennan) an unlucky prospector. Mann's tight focus and the exhilaration of the high country (as shot by William C. Mellor) hook the audience. Ryan's laughing-voiced bad guy holds it—he turns lines like "I remember what suits me" into pinnacles of movie sociopathy. Sam Rolfe and Harold Jack Bloom wrote the Oscar-nominated script.—*M.S.* (Film Forum; March 9.)

NOBODY KNOWS

A long bad dream of a movie from the Japanese director Hirokazu Kore-eda, who created the masterly "After Life." This new project takes its inspiration, loosely, from a true case of parental neglect. A young mother, with the voice of a doll, and a blank space where her sense of responsibility is meant to be, walks out on her four young children, leaving them to run their own lives. The film charts their slow decline, from the first manly efforts of twelve-year-old Akira (Yûya Yagira) to oversee a regular home to the draining away of essential supplies, and on to a final calamity. Like the children themselves, the film is immune to panic or complaint; events unfold in a patient procession of detail, and the camera's scrutiny of faces, feet, and ordinary objects is so obsessive that we seem to be following not so much a domestic drama as the progress of a haunting. Some viewers will never shake off the creepy dismay; others may find that the thickening air of isolation and implausibility leaves them nothing but numb. In Japanese.—*A.L.* (2/7/05) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

ONG BAK: THE THAI WARRIOR
After the Ong Bak (a statue of Buddha) is stolen from a small village in Thailand by an art thief, a villager (Tony Jaa) takes on the mission to retrieve it. This martial-arts picture (it features a fighting style known as Muay Thai, which looks extremely hard on the elbows and knees) follows the conventions of the genre: a gang of tough guys, a colorful ringleader, and girls with shrill voices all try to stop the hero from achieving his goal. What distinguishes this film from many others is the breathtaking talents of Jaa. Without the use of wirework, and with no regard for his own well-being, he flies through the air in feats of derring-do so striking that the director, Prachya Pinkaew, has the good sense to replay them in slow motion. In Thai.—*B.D.* (Empire 25 and Union Square.)

THE SEA INSIDE
The director Alejandro Amenábar's follow-up to his big American hit ("The Others") is a Spanish-language film—the true-life story of Ramón Sampedro, a quadriplegic who led a campaign in favor of his right to die. As Sampedro, Javier Bardem gives a small miracle of a performance. Confined to his bed, unable to move, Bardem has an uncanny ability to express mystery and resilience. The movie centers on Sampedro's loving family and the two women who try to change his life (one supports his euthanasia, the other doesn't). The dialogue is, at times, poetic, and there's a moving, somnambulistic feel to the film—it slowly drifts asleep.—*B.D.* (First & 62nd Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

SIDEWAYS
Paul Giamatti has no chin to speak of, a round-shouldered physique, and the nervous smile of a craven dog. He's the anti-ideal of the American male, and he's making a brilliant career of it. In this wonderful movie by the team of Alexander Payne (writer-director) and Jim Taylor (co-writer), Giamatti plays Miles, a failed novelist around forty who takes off for a wine-tasting tour with his buddy Jack (Thomas Haden Church), a washed-up TV actor who is about to get married. What starts as a last fling at freedom becomes for the two men—but centrally for Miles—a confrontation with middle age and stasis. Miles is a bibliophile, a cinephile, and an oenophile. Jack, however, couldn't care less—in every way, he's blissfully undiscriminating. On the road, the men meet Maya (Virginia Madsen), a divorced graduate student who works as a waitress, and Stephanie (Sandra Oh), a sexy "pour girl." The music and the camera setups are at times pedestrian, but the rest of "Sideways" is vivid and bitterly funny.—*D.D.* (10/25/04) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 11, Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, East 85th Street, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

VERA DRAKE
In its limited way, perfect. The title character in Mike Leigh's new movie is a middle-aged cleaning lady (Imelda Staunton) who races through her London working-class neighborhood singing to herself. The time is 1950, and though the dark and depressed city still suffers from wartime austerities Vera brings the light. The short, pudding-faced woman drops in on invalids, offers a few words of sympathy, and then makes her way to the luxurious flats of the wealthy, whose objets d'art and fireplace grills she dusts and polishes, sometimes on her knees. Vera gives of herself freely and easily, and it is precisely in that selfless and attentive way—brisk, efficient, consoling—that Vera, using a tube and a noxious solution, terminates one unwanted pregnancy after another. Working with an almost preternatural calm, Leigh sets up the repressive and sexually inarticulate atmosphere of the time; Vera's furtive activity is part of an entire system of shadowy reticence and embarrassed dithering. And Leigh captures, without sentimentality or condescension, the grave and stoical spirit of the English working class. The movie is hushed and intense; it evokes an entire way of life.—*D.D.* (10/11/04) (Cinema 3rd Avenue and Empire 25.)

WINCHESTER '73
It's known in film history as the Western that turned stars into industry players, because James Stewart's contract gave him fifty per cent of the profits. But it's also the first film that united him with the rugged action director Anthony Mann and exploited the marrow-deep toughness that won Stewart the Distinguished Flying Cross in the Second World War. He plays a sharpshooter who hunts for the man who killed his father (Stephen McNally), and his quest combines elements of the story of Cain and Abel—and of Oedipus. The movie fills arid Southwestern vistas with bellicose Indians (such as Rock Hudson in war paint), sneering, trigger-happy thieves (the most amusing is the ever-sneerful Dan Duryea), valiant U.S. cavalrymen (including Tony Curtis, billed as "Anthony"), and other stock figures: a good-hearted dance-hall girl (Shelley Winters), an amoral Indian trader (John McIntire). But the way Mann and screenwriter Borden Chase deploy their characters is anything but stock. Courage, integrity, and loyalty get tested at every turn. And Stewart's reedy intensity holds the picture together. His seismic shock of recognition when he first spots McNally is a peak of action-film performance. Originally released in 1950.—*M.S.* (Film Forum; March 9.)

ALSO PLAYING

BAD EDUCATION (11/22/04)
Sunshine Cinema.

THE BEST OF YOUTH
Film Forum.

CURSED
Battery Park 11, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village East Cinemas.

DIARY OF A MAD BLACK WOMAN
Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.

DVD NOTES: WAYNE'S WORLD

ROBERT RISKO

A biography of John Wayne just issued in paperback ("John Wayne: The Man Behind the Myth," by Michael Munn) is dedicated to the "victims and heroes of 9/11," as well as to the proposition that Wayne's courageous, can-do brand of Americanism fits these perilous times. George W. Bush would probably agree. But each new Wayne book, whatever its social or political agenda, serves mainly to remind us that Wayne was the epitome of star acting. He played himself with such conviction that his real self and his screen self merged perfectly, and he did it so often, for so long, that he became part of American mythology. Wayne had an emotional substance beyond that of latter-day action stars like Schwarzenegger or Stallone, and he forged lasting bonds with great mainstream Hollywood directors like John Ford and Howard Hawks. Their best collaborations are now available on DVD.

In the countless quickie cowboy films that Wayne saddled up for throughout the nineteen-thirties, he was just an extraordinarily eager kid, making friends with the camera. That all changed with "Stagecoach" (1939, Warner DVD). Ford's classic Western was Wayne's breakthrough film, as he pulled off the tricky role of the Ringo Kid, which called for an elusive mix of toughness and innocence.

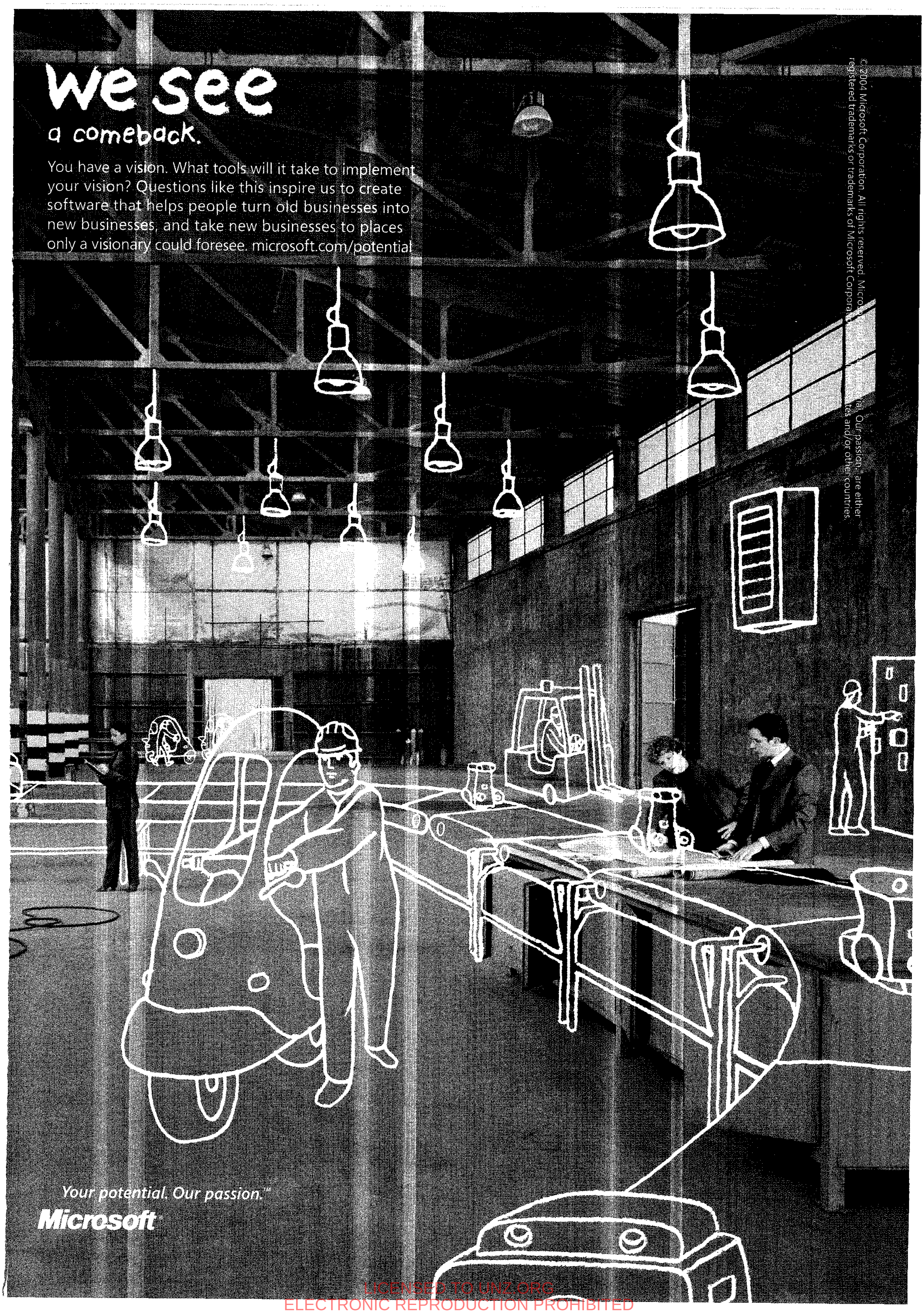
The making of "Stagecoach" wasn't the only time that Ford engaged Wayne's youthful idealism. In Wayne's best-loved non-Western, Ford's "The Quiet Man" (1952, Lions Gate DVD), he plays an ex-boxer who's afraid of his own strength—haunted by the fact that he once killed a man in the ring. Wayne's pugilist does one of the slowest burns in movie history—the fuse smolders for two hours. Throughout the film, his reticence—his anti-violence—makes him likable and even noble. Wayne rarely tried to express divided emotions, but his restraint in films like "The Quiet Man" suggests an exquisite control over his simpler ones.

Ford may have nurtured the boy in Wayne in order to bring out the man, but it was Hawks who toughened Wayne's image into the leathery sage of his later career. Wayne's most famous Hawks role was Tom Dunson, the Captain Bligh of the cattle drive in that turbulent, hard-to-resist spectacle "Red River" (1948, M-G-M DVD). But their most original collaboration was a giddy, stylized oater, "Rio Bravo" (1959, Warner DVD). Whereas "Stagecoach" was pure and stirring, "Rio Bravo" was theatrical, a stage Western complete with music and comedy. Wayne was so confident in his persona that Hawks could play long stretches of the film for laughs. Wayne falls down a flight of stairs and knocks himself out; he risks his neck on the reliability of a wheezing drunk and an old geezer; he's seduced by a bar girl even while he's convinced that he is doing the seducing. All the while, he never loses his dignity.

In the nineteen-sixties, Wayne became the favorite cartoon hawk of the antiwar movement and counterculture. In "The Green Berets" (1968, Warner DVD), he treated the Vietnam War as if it were a simple matter of ridding a frontier town of bad guys at a time when much of the country couldn't tell who the bad guys were. But a year later Wayne showed a flair for self-satire and in doing so earned an Oscar and won over new fans. In "True Grit" (1969, Paramount DVD), he played, with panache, Rooster Cogburn, an unwashed, law-and-order autocrat of the drinking table who—in one memorable scene—ordered a rat to stop chomping a friend's supper and shot it when it refused.

Even after his persona evolved into the magisterial manner of the Duke, Wayne never lost the eagerness that was his first discernible trait. In his last film, "The Shootist" (1976, Paramount DVD), he brought together everything he knew. Playing a cancer-ridden gunslinger, he still did double takes that were more like triples, and he seemed more aware than ever that he was playing to his own outsized myth. Unlike Clint Eastwood, who with far less warmth and energy has won equal acclaim for playing reticent, aging men of action, Wayne didn't truckle to our sentiments. He left the movies as he entered them: a Western hero with both guns blazing.

—*Michael Sragow*



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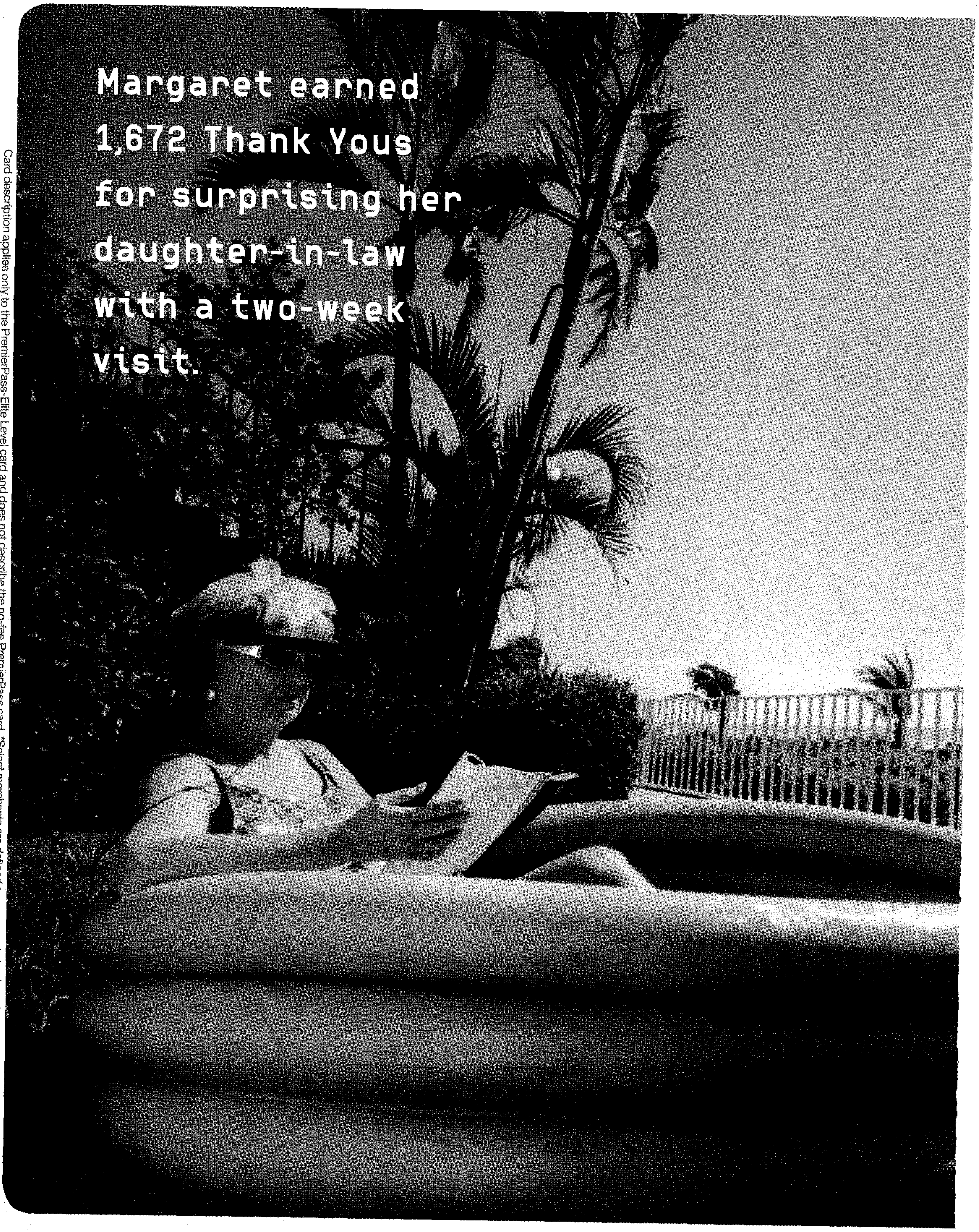
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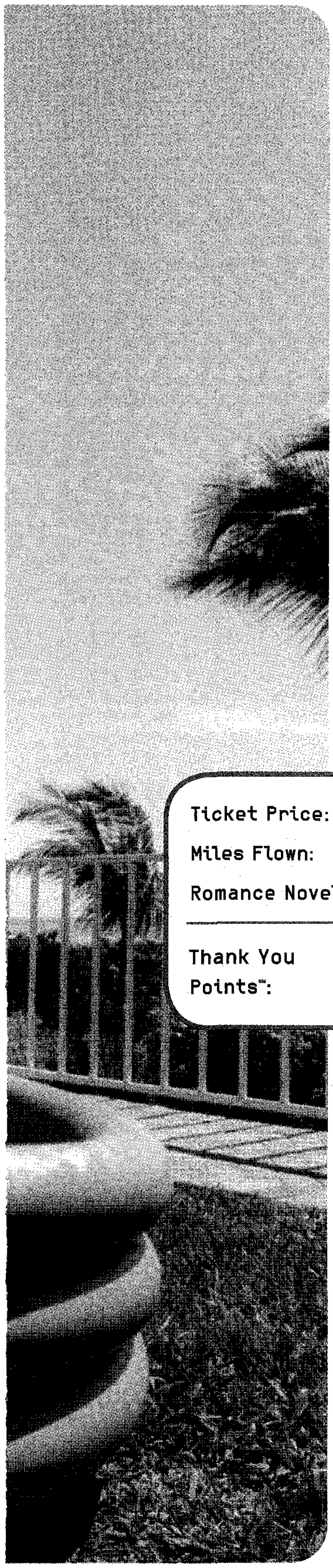

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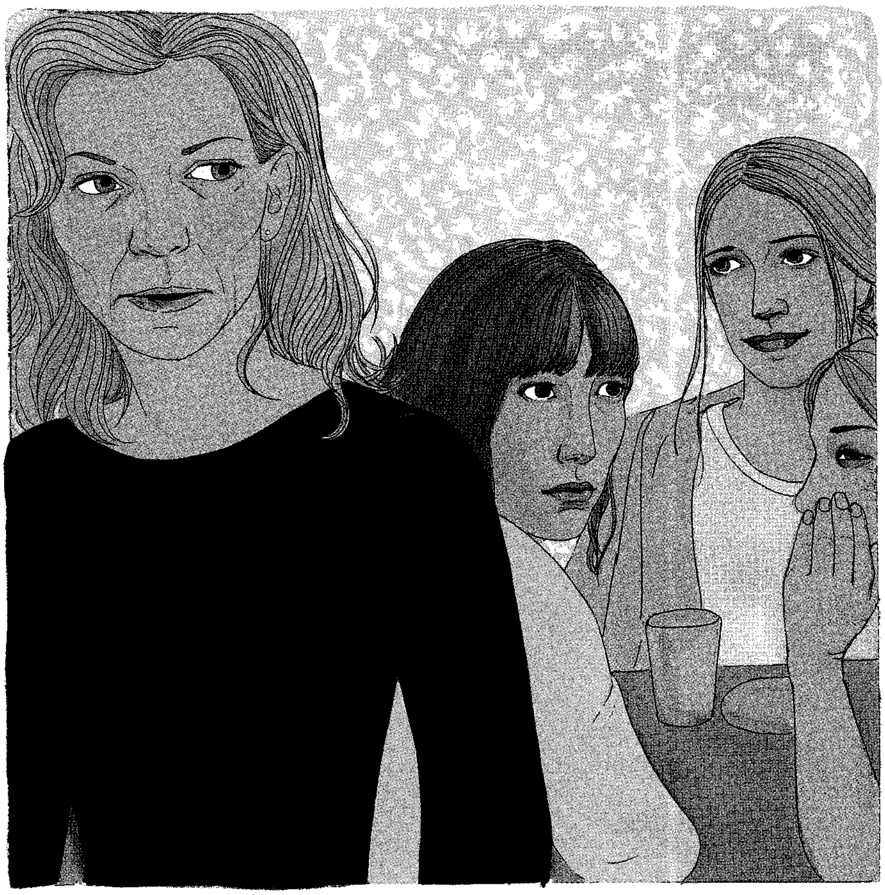
THE JACKET
Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.
THE PACIFIER
Battery Park 11, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.
UP AND DOWN
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.



Joan Allen in Mike Binder's "The Upside of Anger," opening March 11.

LARA TOMLIN

THEATRE ADDRESSES

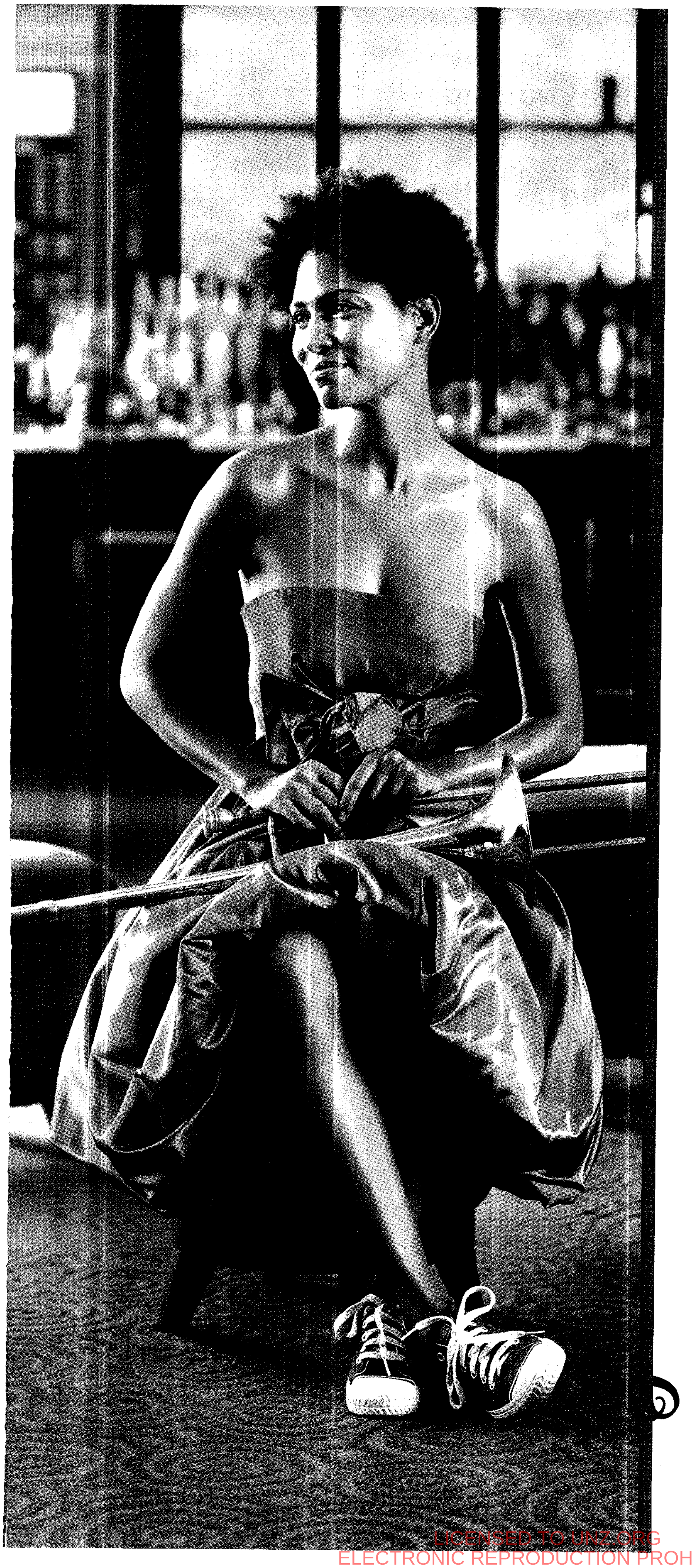
Unless noted, call 212-777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Battery Park 11, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (212-924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (212-398-3939).
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (212-757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
MetroTwin, Broadway at 99th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 66th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (212-688-3800).
Pioneer Theatre, 155 E. 3rd St. (212-254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182).
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES
32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5110)—March 9-15: The New York Underground Film Festival. See http://www.nyuff.com for a complete schedule.
BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—Repertory favorites. March 9 at 6:50 and 9:15: "Only Yesterday" (1933, John Stahl). ♦ A Pupi Avati retrospective. All films are in Italian. March 10 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Bix" (1991). ♦ March 11 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "The House with the Laughing Windows" (1976). ♦ March 12 at 7:30: "Incantato" (2003), followed by an interview with Avati. ♦ March 13 at 7:30: "The Knights of the Quest" (2001). ♦ March 12-13: The BAMKids Film Festival. ♦ "Fright Nights." March 14 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "The Company of Wolves" (1984, Neil Jordan). ♦ March 15 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "The Vampire Lovers" (1970, Roy Ward Baker).
FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—Through March 31: "Essential Westerns." March 9 at 1, 4:40, and 8:20: "The Naked Spur" (†). ♦ March 9 at 2:50, 6:30, and 10:10: "Winchester '73" (†). ♦ March 10 at 1:30, 5:20, and 9:10: "The Violent Men" (1955, Rudolph Maté). ♦ March 10 at 3:25 and 7:15: "Garden of Evil" (1954, Henry Hathaway). ♦ March 11-13 at 1:40, 5:35, and 9:30 and March 14 at 1:40: "High Noon" (1952, Fred Zinnemann). ♦ March 11-13 at 3:20 and 7:15 and March 14 at 3:20: "Shane" (1953, George Stevens). ♦ March 14 at 6 and 10: "Law and Order" (1932, Edward L. Cahn). ♦ March 14 at 7:30: "The Iron Horse" (1924, John Ford). ♦ March 15 at 1, 5:25, and 9:50: "She Wore a Yellow Ribbon" (1949, Ford). ♦ March 15 at 3 and 7:25: "Fort Apache" (†).
FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—Through April 26: "Paris Series." March 15 at 12:30 and 7: "Hôtel du Nord" (1938, Marcel Carné; in French). ♦ March 15 at 4: "Quai des Brumes" (1938, Carné; in French).
MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—Through March 18: "Global Lens 2005." March 9 at 5:30 and March 12 at 7:30: "Today and Tomorrow" (2002, Alejandro Chomski; in Spanish). ♦ March 9 at 7:30 and March 13 at 2:30: "Lili's Apron" (2003, Mariano Galperin; in Spanish). ♦ March 9 at 8 and March 10 at 7:30: "Whisky" (2003, Juan Pablo Rebella and Pablo Stoll; in Spanish). ♦ March 10 at 5:30: "Fuse" (2003, Pjer Zalica; in Bosnian/Serbo-Croatian). ♦ March 11 at 6 and March 14 at 7:30: "Hollow City" (2004, Maria João Ganga; in Portuguese). ♦ March 11 at 8:15, March 12 at 2, March 13 at 5, and March 14 at 8:15: "Buffalo Boy" (2004, Minh Nguyen-Vô; in Vietnamese). ♦ March 12 at 2:30: "Bent Keltoum" (2001, Mehdi Charef; in Arabic and French). ♦ March 12 at 5: "What's a Human Anyway?" (2004, Reha Erdem; in Turkish). ♦ March 14 at 6: "Kabala" (2002, Assane Kouyaté; in Bambara). ♦ Through July: "Miramax: 25 Years." March 10 at 8:30 and March 13 at 2: "The Others" (2001, Alejandro Amenábar). ♦ March 11 at 8: "Bad Santa" (2003, Terry Zwigoff). ♦ March 12 at 5: "Clerks" (1993, Kevin Smith). ♦ March 13 at 5 and March 14 at 5:30: "I've Heard the Mermaids Singing" (1987, Patricia Rozema). ♦ Special event: "Edison: The Invention of the Movies." March 12 at 8: "The Unbeliever" (1918, Alan Crosland).
MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—"Cinema Tropical." March 11 at 7:30: "Sexual Dependency" (2003, Rodrigo Bellott; in Spanish). ♦ Through March 27: "Women's Places: New Films from the Middle East." March 12 at 2: "Turn Left at the End of the World" (2004, Avi Nesher; in Hebrew). ♦ March 12-13 at 4:30: "At Five in the Afternoon" (2004, Samira Makhmalbaf; in Farsi). ♦ March 13 at 2: "Or: Mon Trésor" (2004, Keren Yedaya; in Hebrew). ♦ Repertory nights. March 12-13 at 6:30: "Ikiru" (†). ♦ Peter Sellers films. March 13 at noon: "Dr. Strangelove, or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb" (1964, Stanley Kubrick).
SUNSHINE CINEMA
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—Midnight movies. March 11-12: "The Shining" (1980, Stanley Kubrick).
WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through March 10: "Take No Prisoners: The Bold Vision of Kira Muratova." All films are in Russian. March 9 at 1 and 6:20 and March 10 at 4: "Chekhov's Motives" (2002). ♦ March 9 at 3:20 and March 10 at 1 and 6:30: "The Tuner" (2004). ♦ March 9 at 8:45: "Passions" (1984). ♦ Through March 20: "Rendez-Vous with French Cinema." All films are in French. March 11 at 1, March 12 at 9:15, and March 13 at 4: "36 Quai des Orfèvres" (2004, Olivier Marchal). ♦ March 11 at 3:45, March 12 at 6:45, and March 13 at 9:15: "À Tout de Suite" (2004, Benoît Jacquot). ♦ March 11 at 6:30 and March 13 at 1:30: "Changing Times" (2004, André Téchiné). ♦ March 11 at 9 and March 12 at 1:15: "Holy Lola" (2004, Bertrand Tavernier). ♦ March 12 at 4:15 and March 13 at 6:45: ". . . Happily Ever After" (2004, Yvan Attal). ♦ March 13 at 11:15 A.M. and March 14 at 1 and 6:15: "Tell Me I'm Pretty" (2004, Bernard Jeanjean). ♦ March 14 at 3:45 and 8:45 and March 15 at 1: "Clara and Me" (2004, Arnaud Viard). ♦ March 15 at 3:45: "Innocence" (2004, Lucile Hadzihalilovic). ♦ March 15 at 6:30: "Spelling Mistakes" (2004, Jean-Jacques Zilbermann). ♦ March 15 at 8:45: "The Role of Her Life" (2004, François Favrat).



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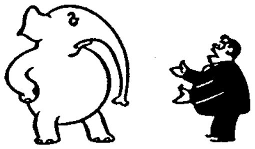
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

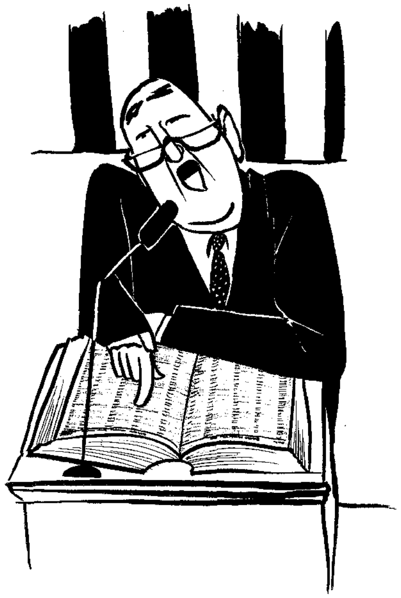
COMMENT
NUKE 'EM



During his first four years as President, George W. Bush nominated fifty-two men and women for seats on the Circuit Courts of Appeals. The Senate confirmed thirty-five of them. During the previous Presidential term, Bill Clinton's second, fifty-one candidates for those same appellate courts were nominated. Thirty-five were confirmed. Call it a tie.

The details differed, but the differences tended to offset one another. On the one hand, Clinton, both by inclination and (the Senate being in Republican hands) by necessity, almost always nominated moderates—moderate liberals, moderate conservatives, and just plain moderates—while Bush has almost always nominated conservatives, very few of them moderate and some of them so out there in the distance that their left-of-center equivalents would look more like William Kunstler than like Floyd Abrams. On the other hand, Senate Democrats, a minority for all but seventeen months of Bush's term, have had to use larger-calibre tactics. Republicans and Democrats alike have taken advantage of the Precambrian rules of their chamber to dispose of nominees who, if put to a vote in the full Senate, would have been confirmed. But while Republicans simply arranged for unwanted nominees to disappear forever into the no-exit in-box of the Judiciary Committee, Democrats have been obliged to flourish the ultimate weapon: the filibuster. Call this a tie, too, though with the ideological edge going to Bush.

Now it turns out that the filibuster is not the ultimate weapon after all. It's merely the penultimate one. As Jeffrey Toobin reported in these pages last week ("Blowing Up the Senate"), the real ultimate weapon is—shades of Joe McCarthy!—the point of order. Here's how it would work. Normally, under the Senate's famous Rule XXII, it takes sixty senators, three-fifths of the full membership, to cut off debate and proceed to a vote. However, during a debate on a judicial nominee, a Republican senator would ask the Presiding Officer to rule that further debate is out of order. The Presiding Officer—Vice-President Cheney—would so rule. The ruling would be challenged, of course. But because such a challenge can be tabled by the vote of a simple majority, and because there are fifty-five Republican senators, the ruling would be upheld. And, boom, that would be that—a piece of procedural ordnance so devastating in its effects and its aftermath that it has been nicknamed "the nuclear option."



The point-of-order strategem would nuke not only the particular filibuster against which it was deployed but all future filibusters against judicial nominees. It would also put an end to any hope of preventing Bush from filling Supreme Court vacancies with clones of his proclaimed judicial ideal, Antonin Scalia, whose activities last week included (a) angrily denouncing his brother and sister Justices for removing the United States from the short list of countries (the others include Iran and China) in which the execution of minors is legally sanctioned, and (b) calling it a "fact" that "government derives its authority from God"—as opposed to, say, the consent of the governed.

The filibuster has been around in one form or another since 1806, when the Senate absent-mindedly neglected to re-adopt a rule allowing a simple majority to move the previous question. It has been a favored tactic of conservatives of a particularly hard-shelled type, who have used it in the service, successively, of

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

preserving slavery, perpetuating white supremacy, and frustrating what Lady Bracknell disapprovingly called "social legislation." By the same token, liberals, historically, have passionately called for its abolition. Lately, the roles have reversed. Now it's conservatives who indignantly denounce the filibuster as undemocratic. And, oddly, they're right—sort of.

The filibuster allows a minority within a legislative body to thwart the will of a majority. But that is hardly the worst of the Senate's democratic imperfections, most of which spring from the arithmetical disparity among state populations. Fifty-one senators—a majority—can represent states with as little as seventeen per cent of the American people. Sixty senators—enough to stop a filibuster—can represent as little as twenty-four per cent. That's theory. What about reality? Well, if each of every state's two senators is taken to represent half that state's population, then the Senate's fifty-five Republicans represent 131 million people, while its forty-four Democrats represent 161 million. Looked at another way, the present Senate is the product of three elections, those of 2000, 2002, and 2004. In those elections, the total vote for Democratic senatorial candidates, winning and losing, was 99.7 million; for Republicans it was 97.3 million. The forty-four-person Senate Democratic minority, therefore, represents a two-million-plus popular majority—a circumstance that, unless acres trump people, is at variance with common-sense notions of democracy. So Democrats, as democrats, need not feel too terribly guilty about engaging in a spot of filibustering from time to time.

One problem for the Republicans is that they like the idea of filibustering legislation (the filibuster has been very, very good to them over the years); they just don't like, for the moment, the idea of filibustering judicial nominees. So they've tried to argue that there is something uniquely awful about the latter. "Filibusters are designed so that the minority can bring about compromise on legislation," Senator Charles Grassley, an Iowa Republican, told Toobin. "But you can't compromise a Presidential nomination. It's yes or no. So filibusters on nominations are an abuse of our function under the Constitution to advise and consent." Actually, you can compromise a Presidential nomination, by submitting another one. (Robert Bork too right-wing? Fine, appoint Anthony Kennedy.) More important, though, a filibuster actually has more, not less, moral legitimacy in the case of a judicial appointment. A piece of legislation can be repealed or amended after the next election. A judge is there for life.

The Democrats have vowed that, if the Republicans opt for the nuclear option, they will bring the Senate to a halt. No more unanimous consent to dispense with the reading aloud of bills. Round-the-clock quorum calls. Extended debate on confirmation of assistant secretaries. They will be perfectly justified in doing this. But they ought to stay off their high horse about the sacred wonderfulness of the filibuster per se. Over the decades, filibusters have done far more harm than good. In "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington," Jimmy Stewart used one to save his Boy Rangers camp. In real life, the record is not so pretty. Absent Senate filibusters, the anti-lynching bills of 1922, 1935, and 1938 would have become law, bringing federal force to bear against racist violence and possibly allowing the civil-rights movement to achieve its victories decades earlier; direct election of the President would have replaced the electoral college in time for the 1972 election; and nearly all Americans would now be covered by a program of national health insurance. So, Democrats, please: If the Republicans go nuclear and ban filibusters for judicial nominations, by all means raise holy hell. But don't elevate the filibuster into a moral principle, and when you get back into power—and, hard as it may be to believe at the moment, that day will come—get rid of it for everything else, too.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

DEPT. OF CALCULATION
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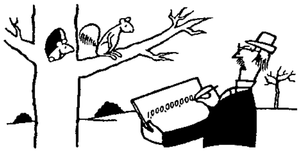


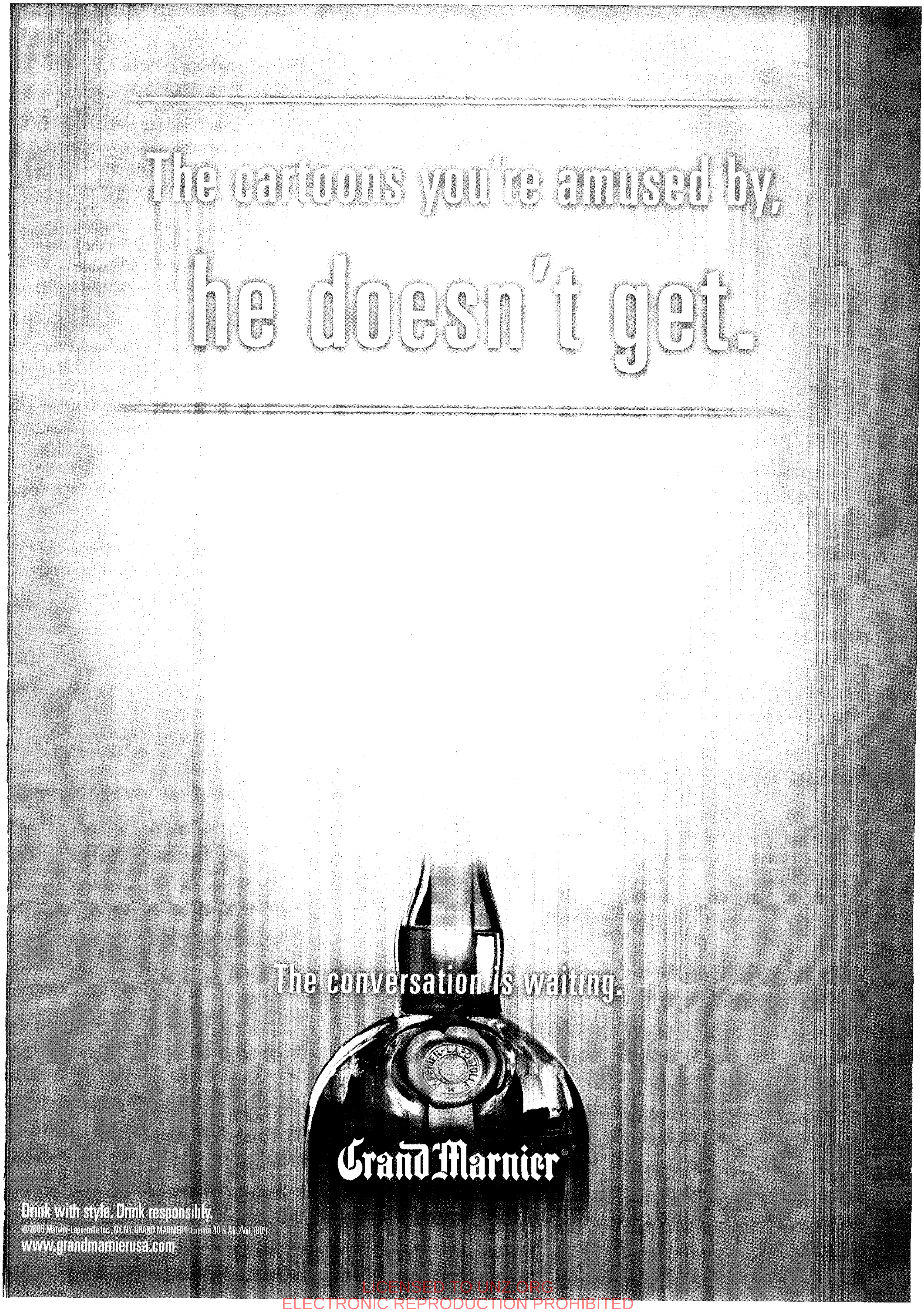
It is no sign of disrespect that the city's plan for counting its over-all homeless population is modelled, in part, on wildlife research—estimating harvestable stocks of Danish fish, or observing the density of elk on the Olympic Peninsula. Nor is it meant to offend that the plan calls for sending dozens of graduate students, more shabbily dressed than usual, into the streets for a night of homeless playacting alongside the truly suffering—a role, incidentally, for which each student will be paid a living wage. The tally was to have been conducted last Monday, but then another nor'easter struck, rendering the hardships of winter-without-shelter perhaps more vivid than most impersonators would have liked. The project was postponed a week.

Dr. Kim Hopper, a medical anthropologist at the Nathan Kline Institute and the former president of the National Coalition for the Homeless, is the architect of what the city is calling the Shadow Count, and the man in charge of implementing its "plant-capture" method: you plant a known quantity of itinerant decoys among the street population at large, and see how many of them you can spot in a night's worth of searching for actual homeless people; the percentage of decoys missed ought to resemble the percentage of the true population unaccounted for in your surveyors' ledgers. (When scientists tag a subset of elk with paintballs, and later attempt a recount from a helicopter, it's called "capture-recapture.")

Prospective decoys—Hopper wants a hundred and fifty—will be handed an instruction card shortly before heading out to assigned locations, at midnight, for three hours of role-playing. The card begins, "Your job is to pass for a homeless person on the street tonight. But you will be unusually stable, well-behaved, dressed for the weather, and approachable." As props, Hopper recommends bringing along only a blanket and "a crummy hat."

Booze? "Several people have asked if that's O.K.," Hopper said last week, in the midst of final preparations. "We had to develop some artful answer: 'You're employees of the research foundation for mental health; these are work hours for you and the usual rules apply.' But if people feel like misbehaving in a civil fashion on their own, I can't police them."

Reading material? Hopper's inclination was to say, "Yeah, whatever helps pass the time." But one of his students asked if he could bring his homelessness textbook along. "That's probably not the thing that ordinary homeless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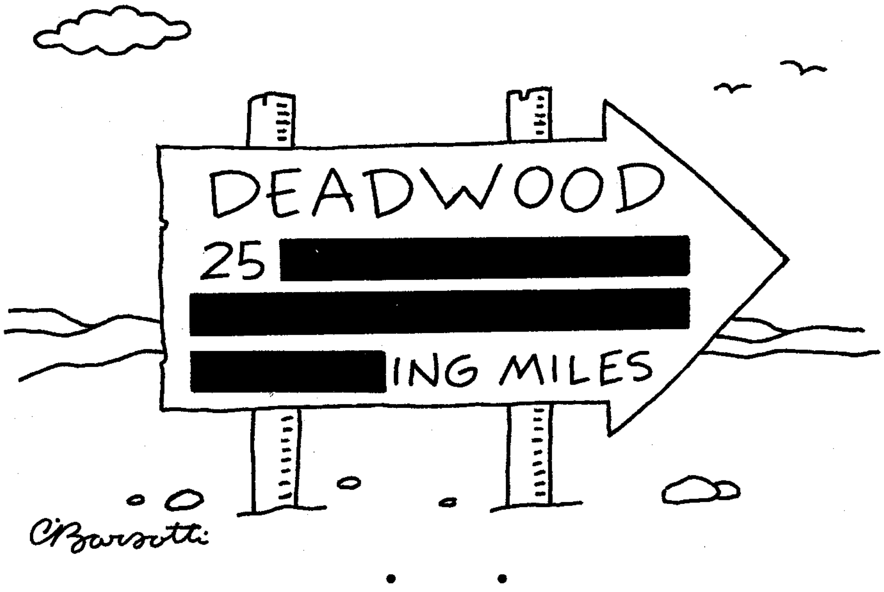


folks would be doing,” Hopper cautioned.

Then again, Hopper isn’t calling for total hobo impersonation. “We would like very much if the students saw this as a research study rather than an audition,” he said. “We don’t want people begging or accosting passersby, or whatever they think homeless people do when they’re out during the middle of the night.”

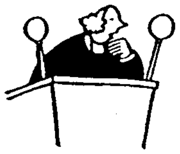
Hopper knows the pitfalls of theatrical immersion; he tried implementing a similar study once before, during the 1990 census, and achieved mixed results. (His team identified fifty-nine per cent of the fakes, a figure that he intends to improve on this time around.) In that instance, as part of an extended ethnography project, he assigned a number of his students to spend five consecutive nights in the same spot, and “it was amazing how many of them felt the clear compulsion to try and go along with the counterfeit that they were really homeless,” he said. “There were some wounded feelings when the truth finally came out, and these folks identified themselves as here for essentially an academic lark.” This year, no mingling allowed.

Dorinda Welle, a former student of Hopper’s, and now herself a medical anthropologist, was a particularly effective impostor fifteen years ago. She quickly befriended a struggling couple living on the lower level of Penn Station—it was the de-facto drug-free zone, she learned—and soon found herself attached, as though she’d joined a family. “After, like, two nights, you start to see commuters as outsiders,” Welle recalled, noting that she’d once had to defend the group from a band of mischievous suburban teen-agers. “And it was poignant to have to leave. We had a whole night of looking back and memorializing those five nights. They were saying, ‘Wow, you know, when you first came in here you looked so lost, like a doe in the headlights. Aren’t you glad you met up with us? We showed you how to handle it.’ ”

Judging from Welle’s experience, though, aspiring decoys might not want to take Hopper’s crummy-hat suggestion too literally. “A lot of us had this idea, you know, that homeless people are down and out, and can’t do their laundry very often, so we showed up in dirty sweatshirts, and clothes that were just really grungy,” Welle said. “So the first thing this couple said to me when we kind of hooked up was ‘Wow, we’ve got to get you some better clothes.’ ”

—*Ben McGrath*

DEPT. OF AMPLIFICATION
REPRIEVE



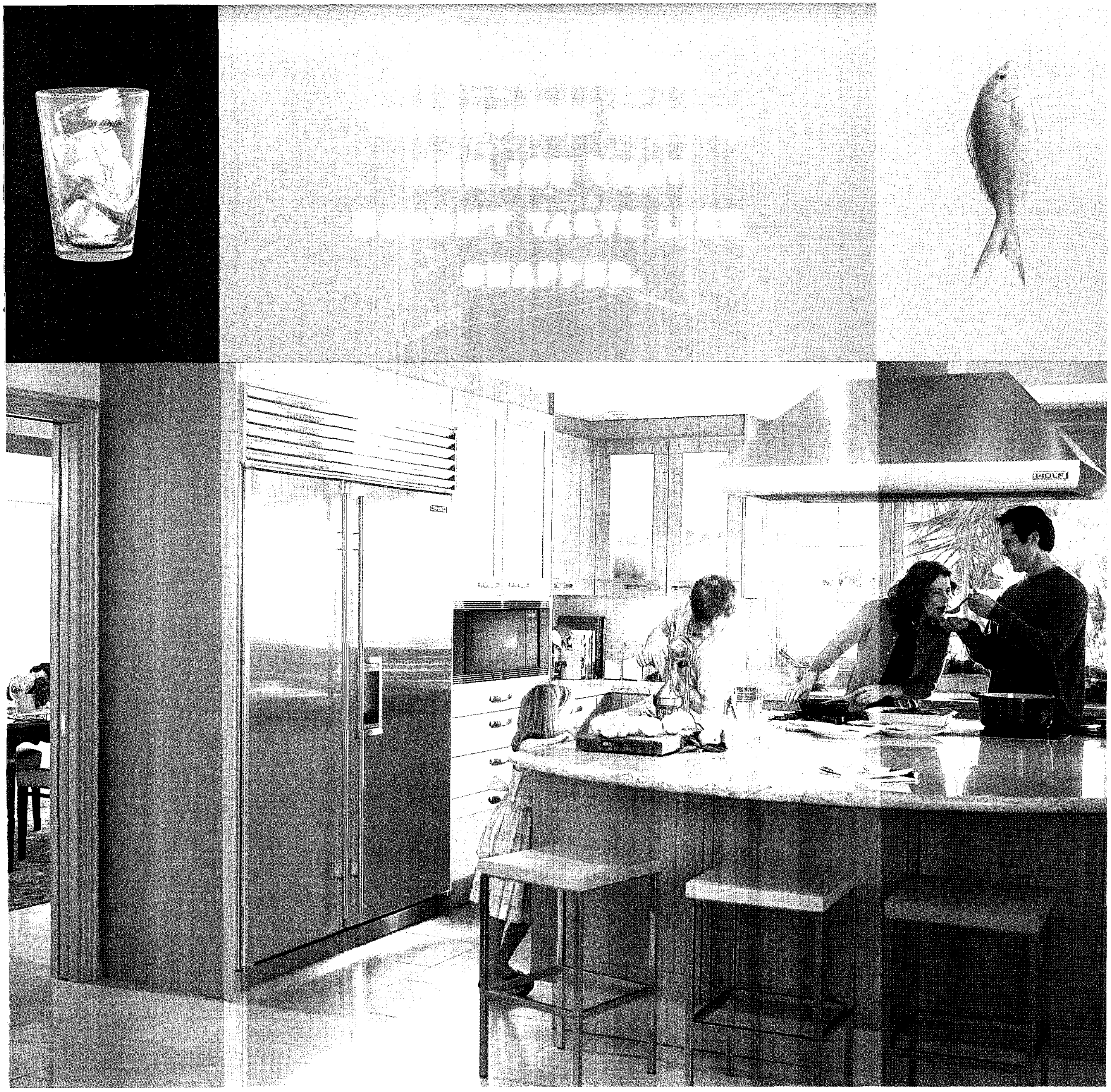
Martin Soto-Fong was seventeen years old on June 24, 1992, when three employees of the El Grande Market, in Tucson, Arizona, were gunned down during an apparent robbery. Soto-Fong and two others were convicted and sentenced to death for the murders. Last year, the prosecutor in the case, Kenneth Peasley, was disbarred for misconduct in the course of the various trials stemming from the crimes, and the convictions of Soto-Fong’s co-defendants were overturned, although they are still in prison on other charges. Soto-Fong, however, remained on death row, where he has been for more than a decade. (The case was examined in “Killer Instincts,” in the January 17, 2005, issue of this magazine.)

Last Tuesday, at around noon, one of the prison’s counsellors spoke through the iron mesh on the door to Soto-Fong’s cell. “He asked me if I had heard the news, and he told me that the U.S. Supreme Court had ruled in favor of Simmons,” Soto-Fong said by telephone last week, referring to the Court’s decision, by a five-to-four vote, to bar the practice of executing juvenile offenders. Arizona has four such inmates on death row, including Soto-Fong, who is now thirty years old. “I wasn’t sure if I could take his word for it, but then later I saw it on the news,” Soto-Fong said. “The first thing I thought about was my mother”—who committed suicide five years ago—“and I wept a little bit and wondered what the next step would be.”

The prison complex in Florence, Arizona, where Soto-Fong is incarcerated, has one of the most restrictive death rows in the country. Soto-Fong, who is a diminutive, balding man of Mexican and Chinese ancestry, is confined to an eight-by-twelve cell all day, every day. Each week, he is allowed three showers and three ninety-minute recreation periods.

State officials say that Soto-Fong will now be removed from death row and placed in a less restrictive facility. His lawyer in Tucson, Gregory Kuykendall, will continue to press the claim, in federal court, that Soto-Fong was innocent of the murders and has been wrongly confined for the past thirteen years. At a minimum, Kuykendall said, he will ask a court in Tucson to grant a new sentencing hearing and, potentially, to release Soto-Fong on bail in the meantime.

“I’m thankful for the Court’s ruling,” Soto-Fong said. “I feel that I don’t have to be so concerned or worried that the state was going to get a chance to execute me. Now I have a little more time, I guess you could say, to continue my appeals without that pressure.” His priority, though, is to win the right to contact visits, which is



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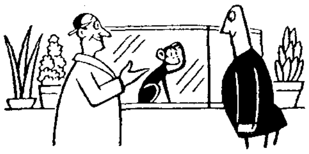
denied prisoners on death row. At the time of the murders at the El Grande, Soto-Fong was attending Lamaze classes with his future wife, Betty. His daughter, Ashley, was born after his arrest. "Once again, I want to be able to hold my family and have a better relationship with my daughter," Soto-Fong said. "Back in 1995, we were allowed contact visits once every six months, but then they stopped those. She's twelve now, and I've only held her twice in my life."

—*Jeffrey Toobin*

TAXONOMY

MONKEY BIDNESS



Criticize if you like, but no way was it the monkey's fault. The monkey, who, given the option, would probably choose to remain nameless, was evidently content to perch in a palm tree near the Undumo River in northern Bolivia, twelve miles from the nearest settlement of *Homo sapiens*. A creature of steadfast habits, a monogamous fruit-eater capable of spending many hours a day hugging his/her mate while crooning a tune with unapologetically repetitive lyrics ("Lu-ca lu-ca lu-ca lu-ca"), the monkey generally maintained a very low profile. Along came Dr. Robert Wallace, a British primatologist and the Wildlife Conservation Society's main man in La Paz. This was five years ago. Over the next couple of years, he spotted the monkey (or, rather, monkeys) several more times. Wallace had other reasons to be in the bush—he was helping the Bolivian park service develop a management plan for Madidi National Park, a New Jersey-size expanse that has the distinction of being the most biologically diverse protected area in South America—but it was impossible not to be impressed by the monkey, a titi about sixteen inches tall. "It hangs around and sulks but is a very good-looking monkey," Wallace said the other day, when he came to town to conduct some monkey business in the offices of the Wildlife Conservation Society, at the Bronx Zoo. "It has a very strong orange coloration on its cheeks, neck, and chest, burgundy-colored feet. The body is light-brown tan. The tail has a white tip and is about forty or fifty centimetres long. The real clincher is its golden crown. When you catch it in the light, it's very striking."

Actually, the most striking thing about the monkey was that until Wallace focussed on it it didn't exist—not taxonomically, anyway. Titi monkeys are found only in South America, and there are twenty-eight officially recognized species. The monkey in Madidi would be the twenty-ninth. A forthcoming issue of the journal *Neotropical Primates* will include an article about the Madidi monkey co-authored by Wallace. Though the paper has already been peer-reviewed by primatologists who agree that a new species has been discovered, publication has been delayed until the monkey has a name. Wallace, a lean, well-mannered fellow in his late thirties, never considered naming it after himself; that sort of thing simply isn't done nowadays, unless, say, you happen to be a zoologist with Trump-like proclivities. Instead, he, his colleagues at the Wildlife Conservation Society, and the Bolivian park authorities decided to auction off the naming rights, with the proceeds being used to protect Madidi.

"To date in Madidi, we've been able to identify eight hundred and eighty-five species of birds, which is more than in all of North America," he said. "We think there may be a thousand—more than in any protected area of the world. At least five thousand species of flowering plants and two hundred species of mammals. Madidi will need two million dollars a year, and it needs an endowment fund of twenty to thirty million dollars. I don't want to suggest that the auction is going to raise that much. If it does, hooray."

And if it doesn't—well, it didn't. The auction, which lasted a week, was conducted online and concluded March 3rd. There were thirty-four lots, one of which—"Put your moniker on an entire species of monkey"—had an estimated value of "$Priceless." Also available were private tours of the Bronx Zoo and the New York Aquarium; vacations in Australia, Tanzania, and Maine; and several pairs of sneakers worn and/or autographed by Ellen DeGeneres and Shania Twain. With twenty-four hours left in the bidding, some items had failed to levitate: limited-edition Asian elephant figurine (estimate, $1,850; no bids); "stunning photograph personally signed by Alanis Morissette" (estimate, $150; bid, $30). A couple—a Colin Farrell signed headshot; a session with fashion-consultant-to-the-stars Philip Bloch and a thousand-dollar shopping spree at Bloomingdale's—appear (insufficient enthusiasm?) to have become extinct. The public-relations people at the Wildlife Conservation Society had been under the impression that there might be a bidding war between Ellen DeGeneres and Michael Keaton for monkey-naming rights; this turned out to be more or less wishful, because Michael Keaton was busy fishing in New Zealand.

Ellen DeGeneres, though, did get involved. For three days, she talked up the monkey-naming on her syndicated show, encouraging viewers to make donations to the "Ellen Monkey Naming Pool." Any money contributed to the pool would be combined with the proceeds from several other Ellen-related items: a blazer, shirt, and sweater ("Ellen's Monkey Outfit"), and five pairs of tickets to sit in the "luxury box" during the show's taping. Mysteriously, these five items were assigned the same estimated value as the naming of the entire species: $Priceless.

In the final hours, the monkey-naming price reached a hundred and ten thousand dollars, one-fifth of Madidi's current annual operating cost. Meanwhile, Wallace had returned to Bolivia, where his wife and colleague, Lilian Painter, a biologist, was about to give birth to their second child. They knew it would be a boy, and, according to Wallace, the name was "still being negotiated."

—*Mark Singer*

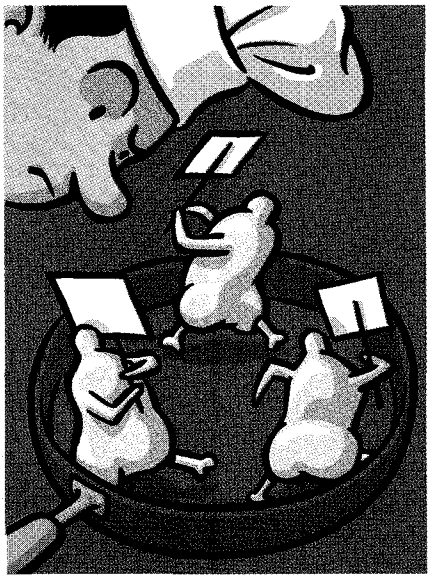
THE FINANCIAL PAGE
NET WORTH

Aside from the usual consortium of Zamboni drivers and Don Cherry fanatics, few people mourned when the National Hockey League cancelled its season, a few weeks ago, after the owners and the players failed to come to a new labor agreement. But the fact that people are uninterested doesn't mean they don't have an interest. Businessmen should be paying attention to the N.H.L., because its troubles could soon be theirs. The impasse is less about hockey than it is about history—and being on the wrong side of it.

Traditionally, owners haven't had such a hard time. In the struggle between capital and labor, more often than not capital has won, because the real source of value for most companies has historically been the hard assets that they owned and controlled. Toyota owes its success to its machines, its assembly lines, and its system of production. For Wal-Mart, it's primarily store location, technological efficiency, and product selection. For Coca-Cola, it's carbonated beverages and exceptional distribution. Workers for these companies are, for the most part, interchangeable, so their bargaining power is limited.

But in a host of industries—most notably in what we now call the knowledge economy—the arrangement is different. In Hollywood, in Silicon Valley, on Wall Street, and in professional sports, hard assets matter far less than people. The employees—the so-called knowledge workers—make the difference between success and failure. (Difficult though it may be to think of pro hockey players as knowledge workers, that is essentially what they have become.) Capital is plentiful; it is skilled people who are scarce. The salient struggle, in this realm, is no longer capital versus labor but, in the words of the business professors Roger L. Martin and Mihnea Moldoveanu, capital versus talent. So when N.H.L. owners speak wistfully of old-time hockey, what they really mean is old-time economics—when the boys were labor, not talent.

The upshot is that in many knowledge businesses the employees often do better than the shareholders. Investors in the Hollywood studios have historically earned small returns, and yet directors and actors make tens of millions of dollars. In the N.H.L. the past two seasons, players reportedly took home seventy-five per cent of the league's total revenue. Even in Silicon Valley, land of the inflated stock price, companies are so desperate to attract and keep the best and the brightest that workers often prosper at the expense of the capitalists. In 2000, according to a *Business Week* estimate, Cisco Systems employees earned between five and eight billion dollars in option profits alone—in a year when the company made only $4.6 billion. And, according to the 2003 book "In the Company of Owners," during the tech boom a few years ago employees at the top hundred New Economy companies pocketed almost eighty billion dollars in compensation.



Talented workers were always in demand, but only recently did they recognize how much they could get for their services. In 1957, Mickey Mantle earned sixty thousand dollars. This year, Carlos Beltran (who is no Mickey Mantle) will make fifteen million dollars. Adjusted for inflation, that's about forty times as much. In the forties, Clark Gable made a hundred thousand dollars a picture—about eight hundred thousand dollars in today's money. Tom Hanks makes closer to twenty million dollars a film. According to Martin and Moldoveanu, C.E.O.s now earn, on average, eight times as much per dollar of corporate profit as they did two decades ago. And on Wall Street traders and bankers now walk away with a much bigger cut than they ever have before. Things may be getting harder for traditional labor—real wages for most workers actually fell last year—but they're getting better for the talent.

Businesses are still figuring out what to do about all this. Closing shop, as the N.H.L. has done, is hardly sustainable. In hockey, as in other sports, the owners have stayed in the game by coöperating to hold down salaries—by forming a kind of union of their own—but in most industries you can't do that without violating antitrust law. Many companies have tried giving workers a greater stake, either through revenue-sharing or through stock options, but there's little evidence that what's good for the talent is good for the shareholder.

Some companies have succeeded at the talent game by increasing revenues. A bigger pie makes it easier to give out a bigger slice. Others have chosen to change the game—to call into question the central premise that talent is scarce. For instance, one reason that C.E.O.s are paid so much is the belief that there aren't many potential good ones. But, as the Harvard Business School professor Rakesh Khurana has shown, a company that broadens its definition of what constitutes a C.E.O. can find high-level talent at bargain prices. The same goes for companies that look abroad (to India, to Russia) for programmers and engineers; they're finding that the talent pool is bigger than they thought.

Still, the trend is unmistakable; in the words of Martin and Moldoveanu, the "talent class has declared war on shareholder capitalists." There are worse things. You don't have to be a Marxist to think that if employees are creating most of the value then they should reap most of the rewards. The real problem arises when the rewards extracted vastly exceed the value created. Consider Ak Bars Kazan, a pro hockey team in the Russian republic of Tatarstan. Ak Bars fans pay five dollars for a seat and twenty cents for a cup of tea. The team will be lucky to gross a million dollars this year. And yet it shelled out roughly fifteen million dollars to recruit a handful of idle N.H.L. stars. Ain't payback a bitch?

—*James Surowiecki*

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

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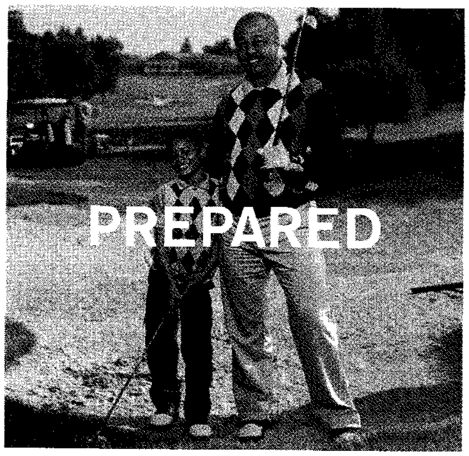

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LETTER FROM ILLINOIS

LOST SON

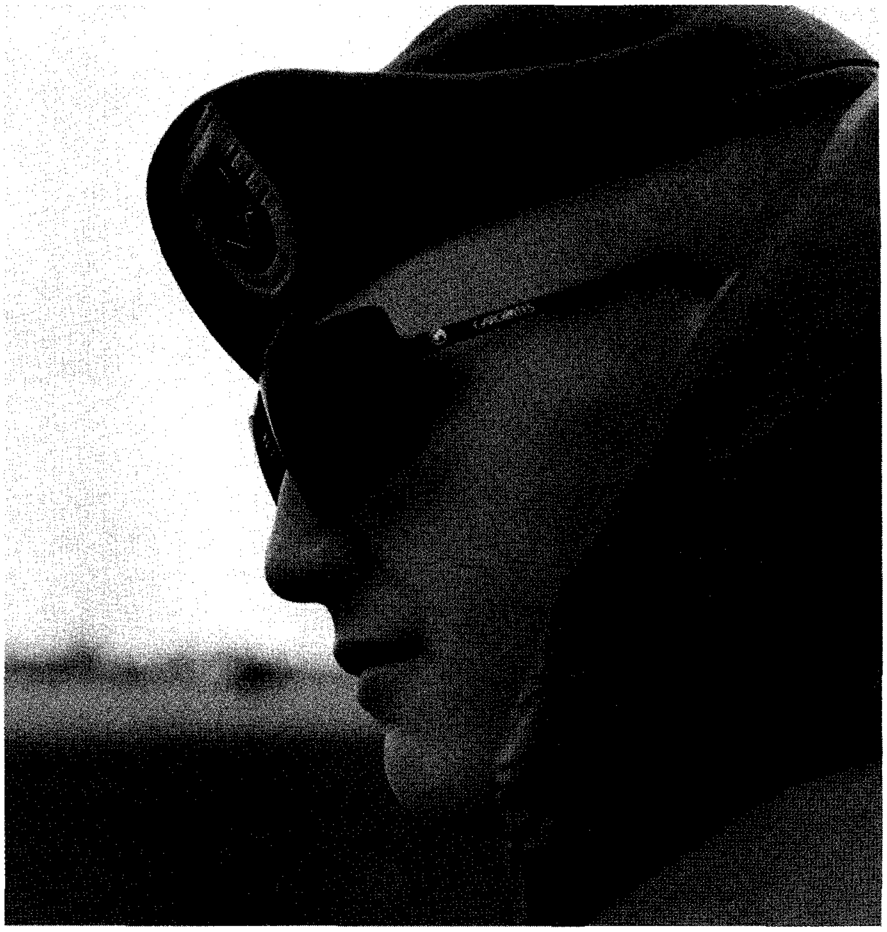
Finding the family he left behind.

BY CALVIN TRILLIN

This happened on Interstate 78, in New Jersey, in November of 2003: While listening to a story on NPR's "Morning Edition" about a National Guardsman who'd been killed in Iraq, I found myself in tears. At the time, I was driving from Manhattan to visit my younger daughter and her new baby, Tobias, who was then about three months old. Because my daughter's husband had to be away from early morning until late in the evening on Tuesdays, I'd been going to New Jersey once a week to keep her company and do a bit of babysitting; we called the arrangement Tuesdays with Toby. The birth of a grandchild is an event that tends to push emotions toward the surface, and that may have been particularly true in my case. My wife had died in September of 2001. The delight I took in Toby's arrival—and in the arrival of my older daughter's baby, Isabelle Alice, who'd been born in the spring of 2002—was sometimes difficult to uncouple from the way I felt about my wife's not having lived to enjoy her grandchildren. So you could say that my emotional defenses were not fully in place. Still, I was astonished that my response to a story about a young man I'd never heard of, a thirty-year-old helicopter pilot from northern Illinois named Brian Slavenas, was to weep.

First Lieutenant Slavenas, I was informed by the voice of Bob Edwards, had been in command of a Chinook helicopter that was brought down by a missile as it ferried soldiers on the first leg of their trip out of Iraq for leaves. Sixteen people were killed and twenty injured—one of the first big casualty reports in the period when Donald Rumsfeld was still saying that the continuing violence in Iraq was being caused by a few dead-enders. Brian Slavenas had been a member of an Illinois National Guard unit that was deployed in April of 2003, just a couple of months after he got his degree in industrial engineering from the University of Illinois. "Morning Edition" ran a segment on him by Susan Stephens, of Station WNIJ, which is affiliated with Northern Illinois University, in DeKalb. He had been "physically huge," Stephens reported—six feet five, two hundred and thirty pounds. But from her first couple of interviews, with a high-school buddy and with a teacher whom Brian had worked for during the summer as a furniture mover, it was apparent that he wasn't the sort of big man who used his size to intimidate. The teacher, Lance Gackowski, talked about how, in pickup basketball games, Brian would cheerfully continue to concentrate on putting the ball in from under the basket while a couple of opposing players hung off him. The high-school buddy, John Rossi, said, "He wouldn't hurt a fly."

Something else that Rossi said was not the sort of thing you'd expect to hear about a young man who'd just been described in terms of his size and strength: "We'd get into conversations and, say, if we couldn't get a conclusion to something, the next day he'd go to the library or go on the Internet and look up the information and call back and go, 'O.K., I figured out what we were trying to figure out.' He just wanted to know." His stepmother, Christi Slavenas, said something similar. Barely keeping her voice under control, she said that Brian was "very self-disciplined and studious and interested. He liked history. He liked reading, he liked talking to people about ideas." Susan Stephens's segment had lasted only two or three minutes, but it left a clear impression of Brian Slavenas: a powerful but good-natured young man



First Lieutenant Brian Slavenas, who died in Iraq on November 2, 2003.

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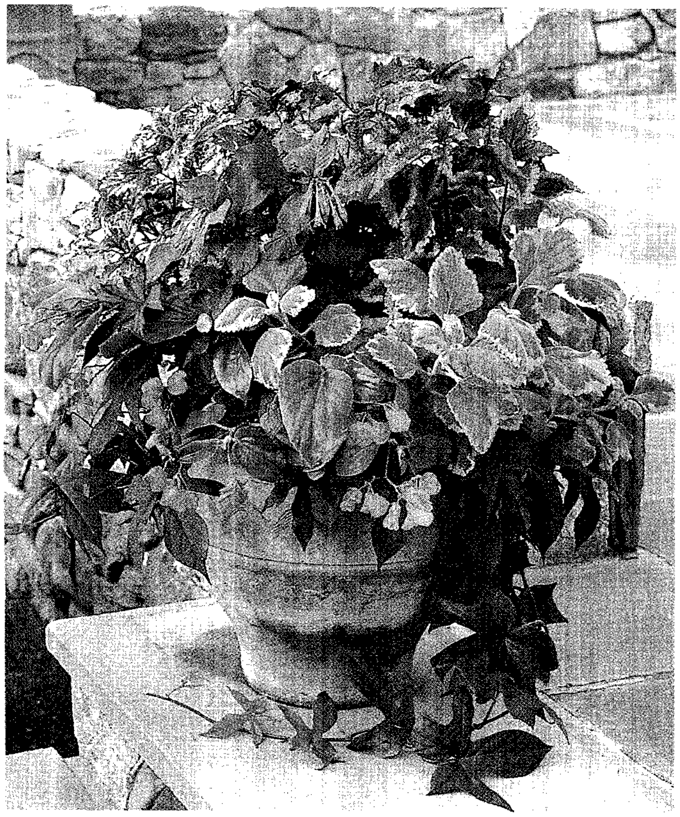

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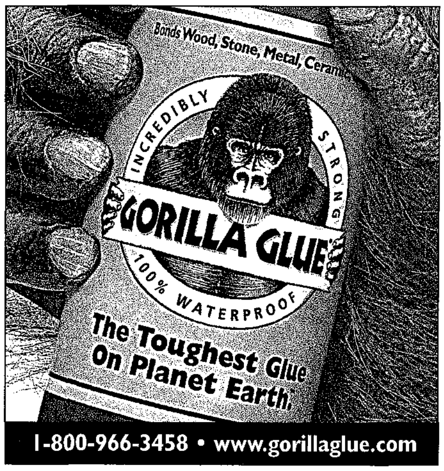
with intellectual curiosity. He sounded like the sort of young man you'd want your son—or, yes, your grandson—to emulate. I don't know whether it was that thought or the cracking of Christi Slavenas's voice or John Rossi's statement "He was the best friend you could have" that triggered my response, but for a moment or two I had to consider pulling off the road.

I have to get on the record something else that happened while I was listening to that segment from Illinois. I said—out loud, I think, even though I was the only person in the car—"What a waste!" From the start, I'd believed that the war in Iraq was unconnected to defending ourselves against terrorism, and I'd been particularly disturbed by the unfairness of who bore the burden of fighting it. Brian Slavenas sounded like someone who had gradually made his way through college by availing himself of the tuition help offered by the National Guard. I was angered that he had been sent to die by policymakers whose own sons were perfectly safe and who themselves, almost to a man, had evaded serving in Vietnam. By the time I reached my daughter's house, I had more or less calmed down, but in the months that followed I never quite got Brian Slavenas out of my head.

I felt terrible about saying that his death had been a waste. Even though nobody in his family had been in the car to hear it, I felt that it had been disrespectful to them. I couldn't make the case to myself that Brian had literally died defending his country—soon Rumsfeld himself began denying that he'd ever called Iraq an immediate threat to the United States—but I sometimes tried to see his death in ways that gave it some nobility. I told myself that it's not the soldier's place to choose the war or the battle. Defending the country requires a ready supply of young people who are willing to go where they're sent and do their duty, even if, inevitably, there will be times when they're sent to fight an ill-conceived battle or even an unnecessary war. Were the soldiers who stormed Gallipoli any less heroic or patriotic than the soldiers who stormed Iwo Jima?

I found myself hoping that Brian's parents were true believers in the war in Iraq, so that, unlike me, they didn't need to stretch to believe that he died defend-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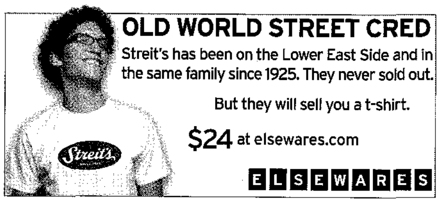

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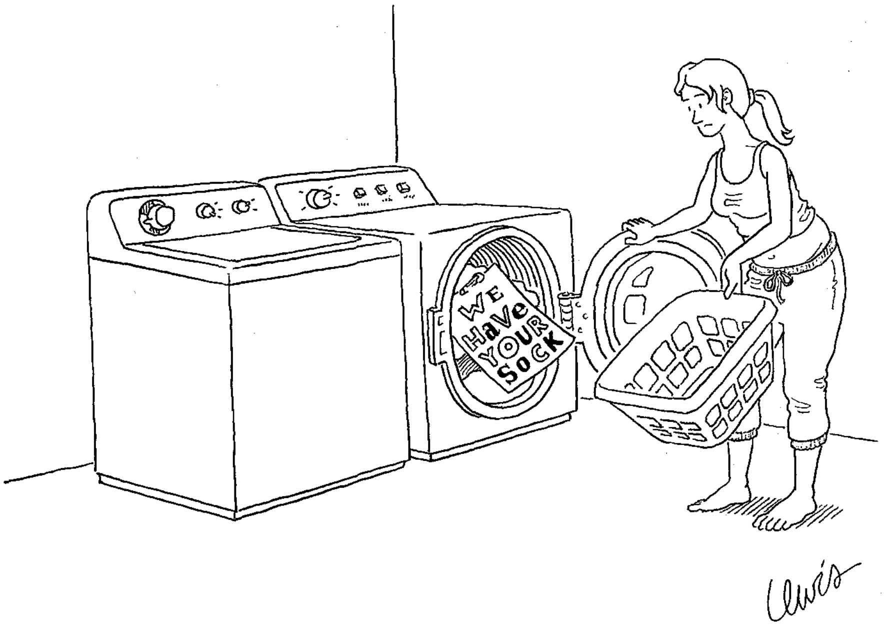
ing his country. I thought I'd like to meet them someday. It's possible that I just wanted to offer my condolences and tell them that their son sounded like a splendid young man. Or maybe I wanted to find out if the impression I had of Brian from that brief radio report was a true impression. I felt uneasy being so upset about the death of someone I knew so little about. Finally, a year after the Chinook went down, I decided to go to Illinois.

Before I left, I discovered that there had been a brief stir in the press a week or so after Brian Slavenas died. A few stories were written about whether the Chinook had been shot down because it was inadequately equipped, but most of the coverage was about his family. Brian's father, Ronald Slavenas, a school social worker who was born in Lithuania and came to America as a teen-ager, had served in the 82nd Airborne Division between high school and college and had later joined the National Guard; in the days following his son's death, he told one reporter, "This country took us in very generously. My philosophy is put your shoulder to the wheel." A son from Ron Slavenas's first marriage—Brian's half brother, Eric, who is forty—had been in the invasion of Grenada as a forward observer with the 82nd Airborne. Brian's older brother, Marcus, had been a marine in the Gulf War. Brian, like every other male in the family, had done a hitch in the military right out of high school—he was a paratrooper, based in Italy—and had later, for a time, served in the same Guard unit that his father was in. When reporters went to Ron Slavenas's home, in Genoa, Illinois—where Brian had lived until third grade, when his parents got divorced—they found a large American flag and a wreath bearing the words "America's All American Hero—We Will Never Forget You."

But Brian's mother told a different story. In the view of Rosemarie Dietz Slavenas, who'd just retired as an associate professor of early-childhood education at Northern Illinois, Brian never had any interest in being a hero and was under no illusions about the war in Iraq making the United States more secure. In fact, she said, he had tried to resign his commission rather than go to Iraq. Brian's family on his mother's side had, instead of a military tradition, a tradition of opposing wars. Rosemarie Slavenas had demonstrated against both of the wars her sons fought in; she is a longtime member of the DeKalb Interfaith Network for Peace and Justice, whose demonstrations tend toward silent vigils. Her older sister marched against the war in Vietnam. Their mother, now in her eighties, shares their views.

Brian's father had taken it for granted that there would be a formal military funeral, but Brian's designated next of kin—and thus the person entitled to make such a decision—was his mother. Rosemarie Slavenas said that it was her responsibility to give her son the



funeral that was appropriate for his life. The service she arranged, at the Faith United Methodist Church, in Genoa, was a civilian service, with flowers rather than an American flag on the casket, and no weapons in sight. Afterward, addressing some reporters and cameramen gathered outside the church grounds, Rosemarie Slavenas said, "George Bush killed my son. I believe my son Brian died not for his country but because of our country's lack of a coherent and civilized foreign policy."

Eric Slavenas, a strong supporter of the war, had said that not having "Taps" and a flag-draped casket at Brian's service amounted to "spikes in my dad's and my heart." Many of those who had attended the funeral at Faith United Methodist later walked over to the Genoa Veterans Home, a few blocks away, for a ceremony that included some of the military elements that Ron and Eric Slavenas had counted on—an honor guard and a memorial rifle volley and helicopters flying overhead in a "missing man" formation and a bagpipe playing "The Caissons Go Rolling Along" and a display of Brian's military decorations. Marcus attended both ceremonies, but in interviews he'd argued that American soldiers shouldn't have been sent to Iraq in the first place. ("All of them should have been back here dating girls and working jobs.") On the Internet, the split in the Slavenas family generated considerable traffic, some of it ugly. One pro-war chat room had dozens of postings gathered under the heading "EVIL SHREW LOSES HERO SON."

So many people came to Brian's funeral that the overflow had to be accommodated in the church basement. There were a number of military people attending in uniform, but there was no ceremonial military presence. The eulogies were about the civilian Brian Slavenas. From what was said at the funeral, it was obvious that Brian had an even broader spectrum of interests than I'd realized. He was a serious power-lifter, specializing in the bench press, but he was also a serious pianist, specializing in Chopin. He loved skiing, but he also loved chess. The friends who spoke said that despite Brian's range of competence he was modest and self-effacing. He was, by all accounts, embarrassed by attention and quiet with

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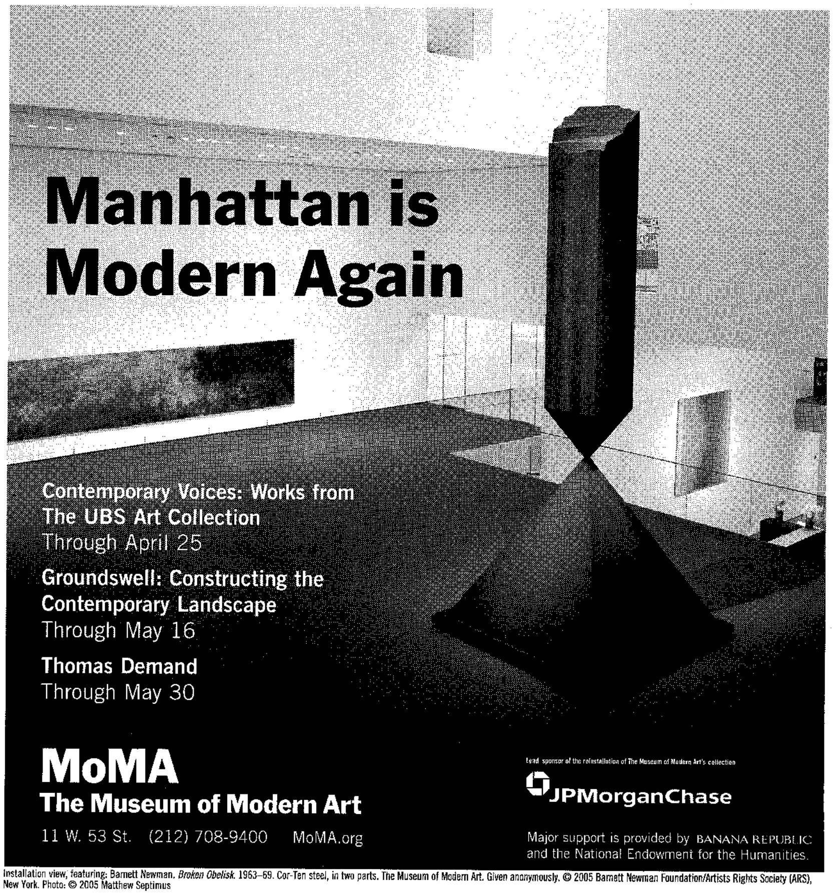

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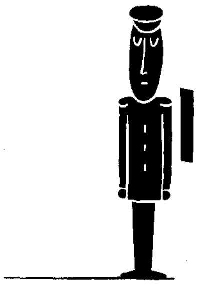
people he didn't know well. Jennifer Lasiowski, who had gone out with Brian for a year when they were at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, said in her eulogy that Brian was so shy it took him six dates to kiss her.



DeKalb County is a perfect rectangle of a county an hour or so west of Chicago. Parts of it—the patch north of Genoa, for instance—look like the sort of flat Illinois farmland that couldn't have changed much in decades; the farmhouses resemble the picture that springs to my mind when I hear someone who's from the rural Midwest talk about "the home place." Genoa (pronounced Juh-NO-ah) is a town of four thousand where the main street is called Main Street and the newspaper is delivered by a boy on a bicycle. To the south, though, an occasional subdivision sits on former cornfields; DeKalb, a city of forty thousand people about fifteen miles from Genoa, has not only subdivisions but a strip of box stores and franchises that would make an urban planner of any sensitivity weak at the knees.

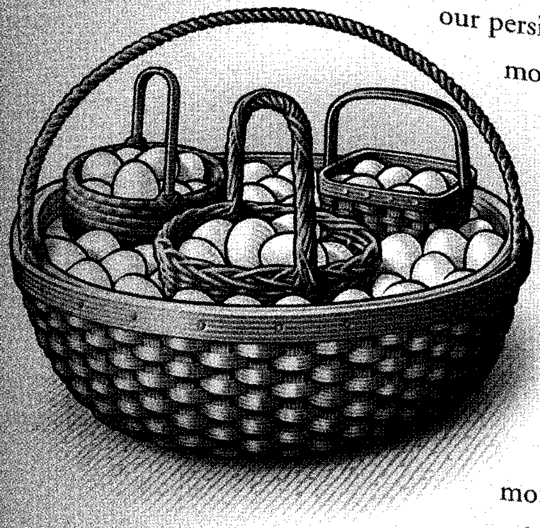
Rosemarie Slavenas began teaching at Northern Illinois not long after her divorce, so, in the days before most of the box stores and franchises arrived, Brian grew up in DeKalb and made regular trips to Genoa to visit his father. Wrestling is the big sport at DeKalb High School, but Brian, who threw the discus for the track team and played the drums in the marching band, wasn't a wrestler. For one thing, I was told by Lance Gackowski, who coaches wrestling among his other duties, Brian didn't really fill out until he had almost finished high school. Also, in Gackowski's experience, effective wrestlers tend to work off of some sort of anger. "Brian didn't seem to have that," Gackowski told me. "He was a very gentle person."

That's what I heard from Jennifer Lasiowski, a slim, direct young woman who works in a Head Start program, and that's what I heard from Ed Rubeck, a grade-school pal of Brian's who still moves furniture and looks like he doesn't need much help with the pianos: Brian was a very gentle person. Even Ron Slavenas, in describing a son who had died in battle, spoke of Brian as "a gentle giant." Rosemarie Slavenas has said that the last thing her son told her before shipping out was "Mom, I don't want to hurt anybody."

Among the people I talked to in Illinois, in fact, there was a remarkable consistency in how Brian was remembered. He was methodical, working slowly and patiently on whatever skill he was trying to acquire; at the gym used by the University of Illinois weight-lifting club, he didn't miss workouts. His passion for flying was so strong that, even after his engineering degree was in hand, he didn't completely rule out a career in aviation; for him, the practical appeal of the Guard had included not only tuition support but pilot training. He was the sort of student who studied hard preparing for an exam, was always pessimistic about how he had done, and almost invariably turned out to have done very well. He was thoughtful—someone who would always insist on taking the most cramped spot in the moving van. He had a modesty so profound that it sometimes seemed to shade into a shortage of self-confidence. His friends in the weight-lifting club didn't learn until after his death about the trophies he'd won in out-of-town tournaments. When I asked Jennifer Lasiowski why she and Brian had eventually broken up—I don't really know what made me think I had a right to ask that question—she said, "He thought I could do better."

From the way she'd spoken of him, I suspected that she didn't necessarily agree. Neither did I. Modesty may be particularly becoming in the person of someone who could win bench-press tournaments and play Chopin and fly a helicopter and co-write a thesis called "An Economic Analysis of Combination Vaccines." I grew up one state away from where Brian Slavenas grew up, and, as I spoke to his friends and family about all he'd accomplished in his short life, I could almost hear him mumbling what I've always treasured as the Code of the Midwest—"No big deal."

SPOT DRAWINGS BY PHILIPPE PETIT-ROULET



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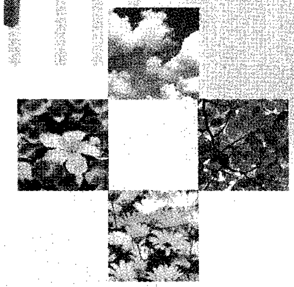

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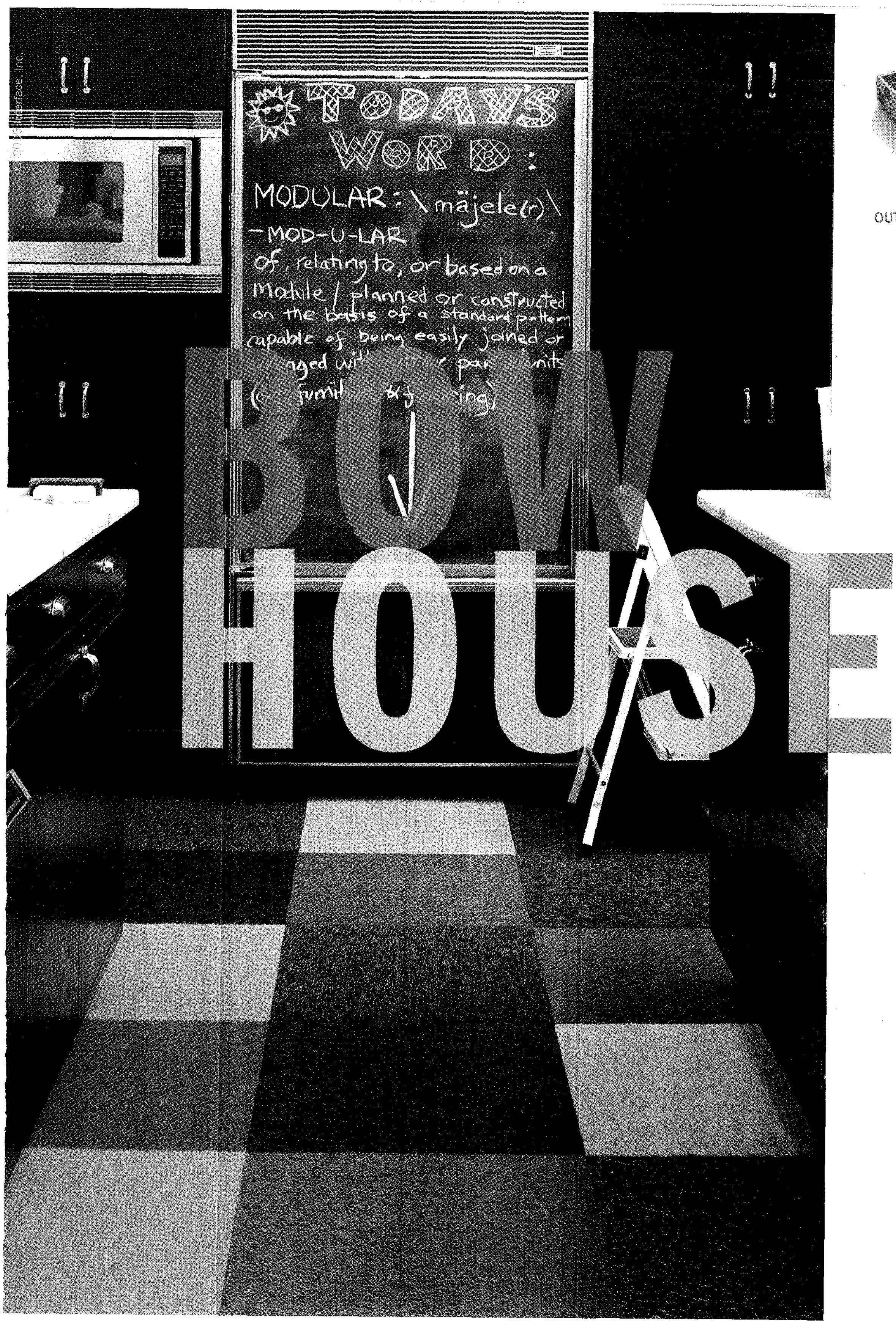
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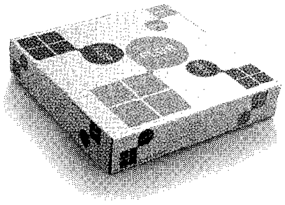
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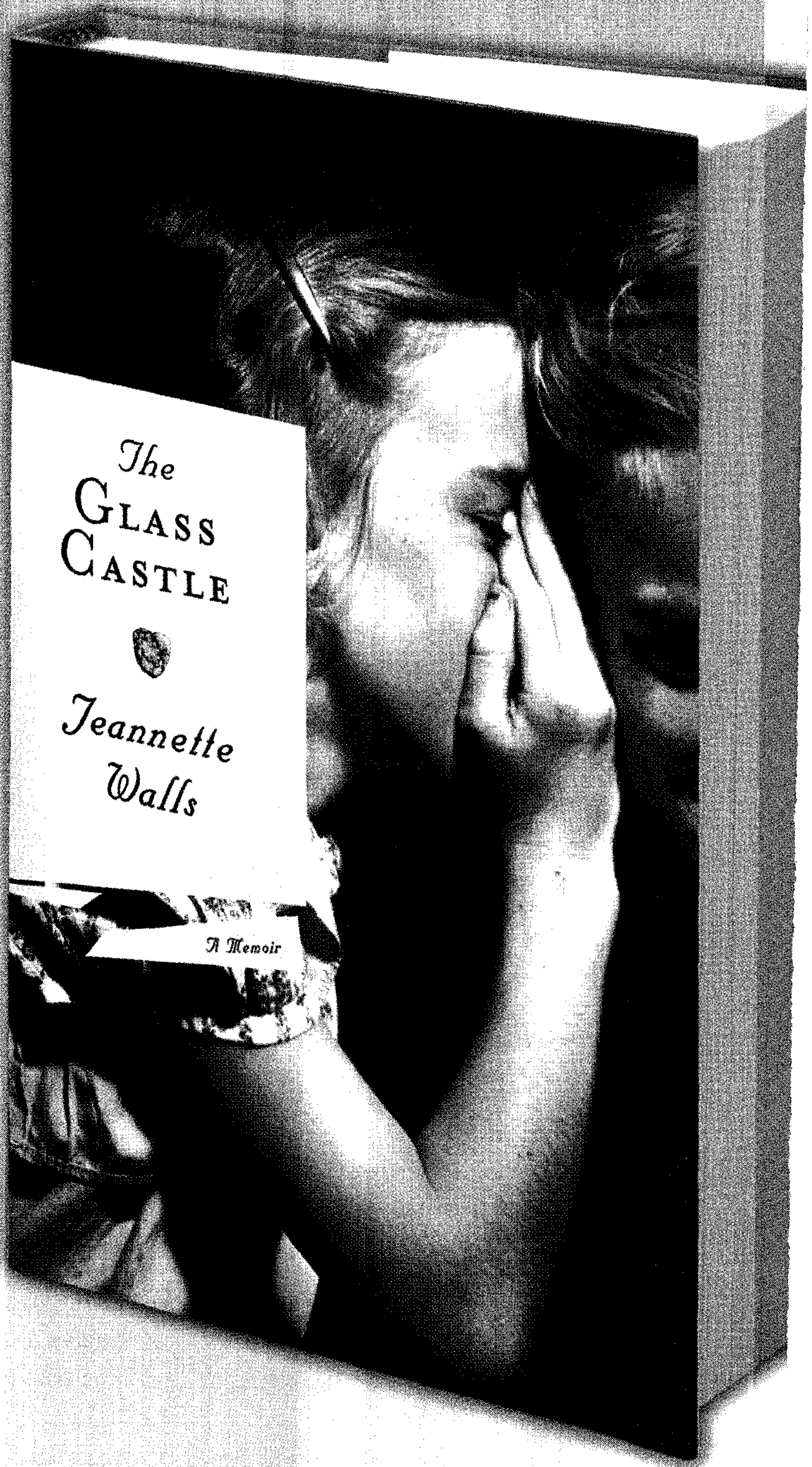

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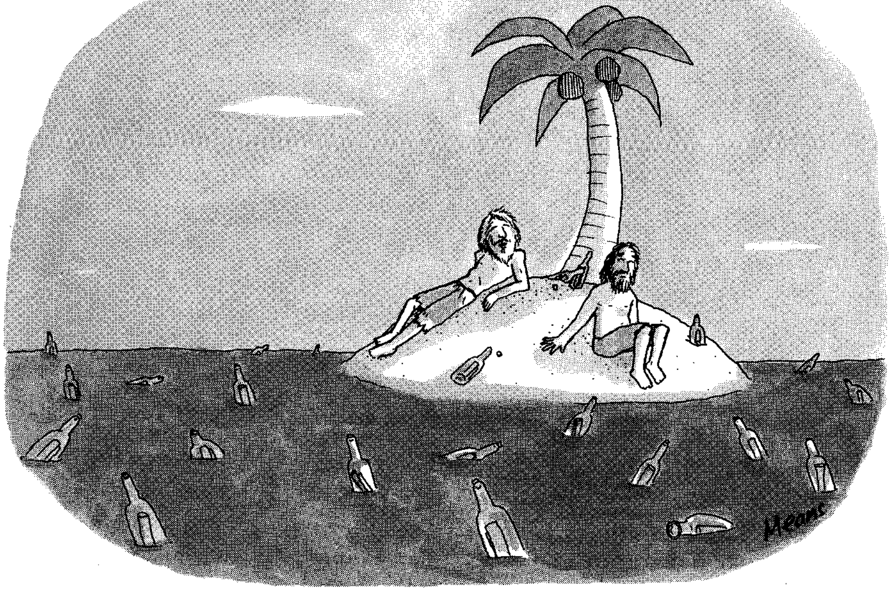

"Great party last night."

• •

Brian's brother Marcus struck me as an engaging young man, but he is also someone who, at thirty-four, might be described by a school social worker as still trying to find himself; when I met him, at his father's house, Marcus was about to leave for Puerto Rico, where he hoped to acquire the credentials to become a scuba instructor in Belize. In the divided Slavenas family, from what I could gather, Brian, the last born, played the role often associated with the first child—the dutiful child who tries to please his parents and keep the peace, the child who doesn't smoke or drink, the child who never gets into trouble. Rosemarie Slavenas sometimes refers to him as "my wise child." In Iraq, he wrote both parents regularly—devoting most of his last letters to his mother to the care that should be given an ancient family dog named Pepper and mentioning in one letter to his father that he was considering staying in the military as a chopper pilot. Lance Gackowski thinks that the breadth of Brian's interests, as well as his inclination to stay out of the limelight, had something to do with having parents who were divorced and held widely divergent views. "Some kids in that situation just shut down," Gackowski told me. "He tried to fulfill both of their visions of what a noble man should be."

Ron Slavenas, who retired last year, has spent a good deal of time travelling to military and community gatherings that honor his son. His house, whose front lawn is dominated by a pole that flies not only the American flag but the flag of the 82nd Airborne Division, has some elements of a military museum. Slavenas has on display the triangular box that was presented to him at the military ceremony, with a neatly folded American flag and his son's medals. The walls hold, among other military mementos, a huge gold-star flag with Brian's name on it and, across from a pencil drawing of a Chinook helicopter, framed copies of resolutions about Brian from dignitaries and legislative bodies. The centerpiece of that display is the letter sent to the survivors of every fallen soldier by the President of the United States.

Rosemarie Slavenas has been to a gold-star mothers' event, but she's more likely to commemorate Brian among people who oppose the war. In her house—in Rockford, where she moved in 2003 after she retired—the only indication that Brian was in the military is

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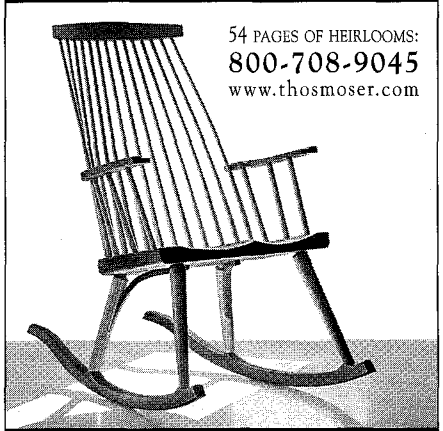

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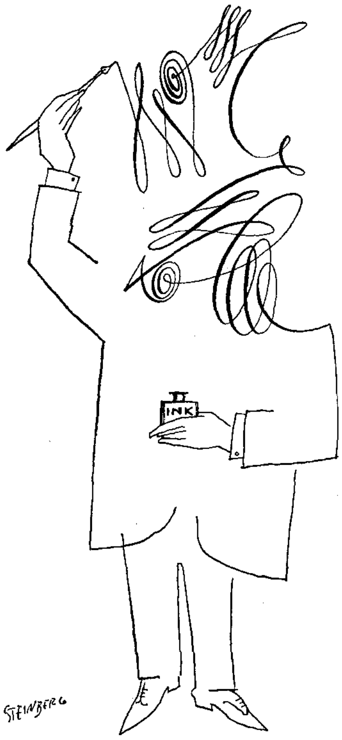

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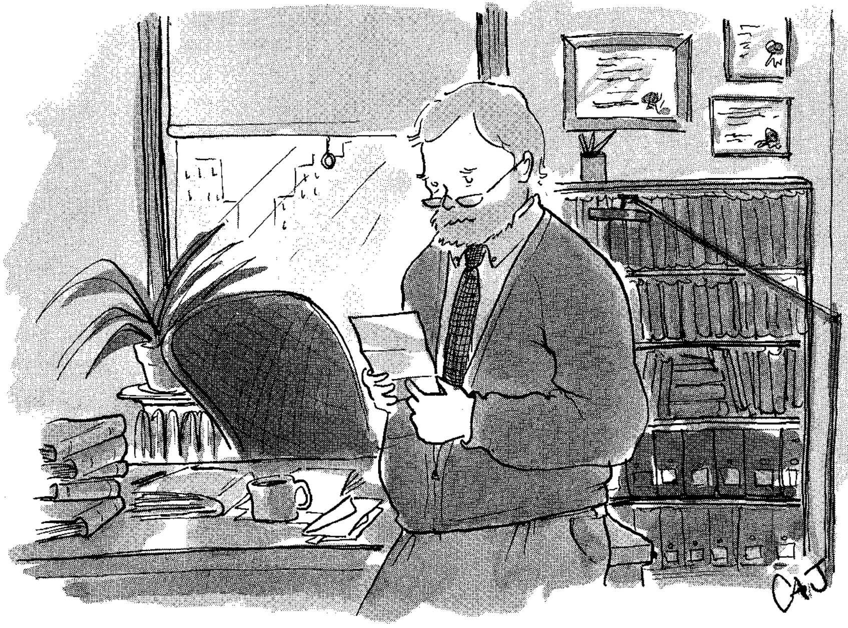
that his high-school graduation portrait, on the wall next to a similar portrait of Marcus, has his dog tags hanging from the frame. A large picture of an Indian in a canoe, a picture Brian painted when he was eight, hangs on the wall above an upright piano. The piano itself is a memento of Brian. In the two years that he attended Northern Illinois, before transferring to the Urbana-Champaign campus, she could tell when he got in at night because music would start wafting through the house—"Chopin that would break my heart." Rosemarie Slavenas displays no framed resolutions or official letters of condolence. She is still waiting for an answer from her own letter to the President, a letter that said, in part, "My beloved son Brian died for your red herring in the sand. . . . He did not give his life. It was cruelly taken from him by your rush to war."

Neither Ron nor Rosemarie Slavenas likes to dwell publicly on their differences over their son's funeral, partly because they think it detracts from the memory of Brian. Maybe for the same reason, or maybe because the Midwestern instinct is to seek some common ground, I found myself looking for ways in which they are not as far apart in their views as they may at first appear. Rosemarie Slavenas, for instance, is not automatically hostile to the military. She told me that Brian did value the organization and discipline of the Army and that the Army taught him important skills. She liked the casualty liaison officer sent by the Illinois National Guard; at the funeral, he walked by her side, in his dress uniform and his beret, from the Faith United Methodist Church to the graveyard nearby.

In the Slavenas family, the one person who impressed me as a true believer in the war was not Ron Slavenas but Brian's half brother, Eric, who operates a landscape-contracting service near Genoa. Eric, who says that he speed-reads a couple of hundred pages on current affairs every day, assured me that weapons of mass destruction and Saddam's links to September 11th have been found in Iraq but were suppressed by the liberal media. Ron Slavenas, despite the military displays, does not have Eric's certainty. He's a cordial man who seems to try hard to see other people's point of view. Although he believes that the United States has to persevere in Iraq now that our troops are there, he has said that we went to war "a little too fast." He told me that Brian, while being intent on doing his duty, was not "gung ho, not a muscle-flexing warrior." Ron Slavenas wouldn't say that his son tried to resign rather than go to Iraq, but he—and even Eric—would acknowledge that Brian went in to his commanding officer in order to "look at his options," eventually learning that resignation after deployment is

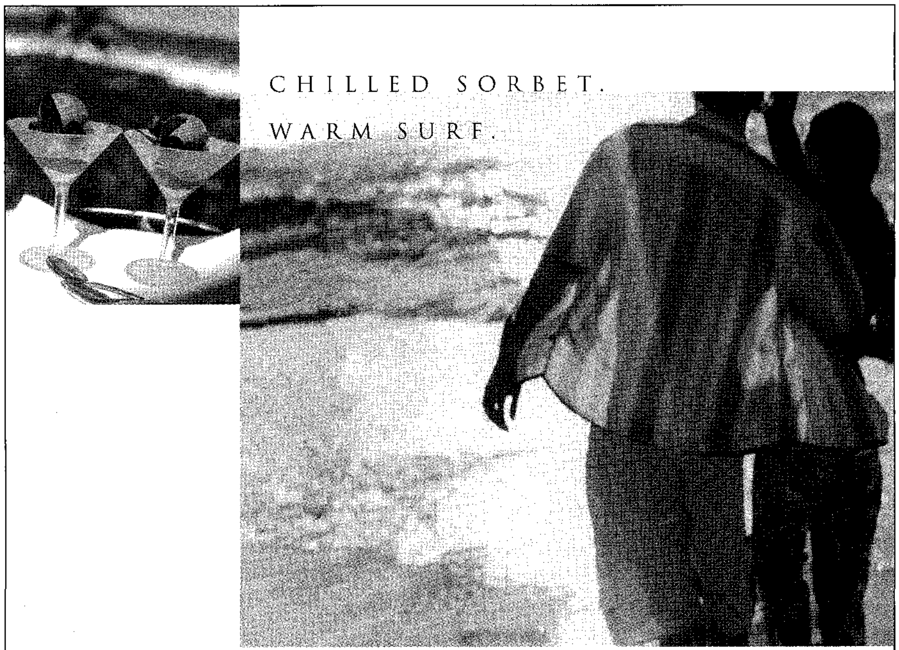


"You may already be a Nobel Prize winner!"

not permitted. To me, trying to resign and looking at your options sound like they could be different ways of saying the same thing.

Among the people I talked to—the Slavenas family, the friends who visited Brian at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, just before his unit shipped out to the Middle East—there is agreement that Brian would have been delighted if one of his options had been to stay in Illinois. After constantly shifting back and forth between college and the military, he'd finally received the degree he had sought for years; in Ron Slavenas's words, "The world was just opening up for him." On the other hand, there is agreement that, once it was clear that such an option didn't exist, Brian would have done what was expected of him, as he always had. The way Brian went about things, John Rossi said to me, was "If you're going to do it, you might as well do it full bore."

"The single most important thing for me is to keep his spirit alive in my heart," I was told by Rosemarie Slavenas, who in her letter to George Bush had described her son as "an honorable, restrained, talented, caring man." I know that both of Brian's parents believe that he lived a noble life. They're left with differences in how he should be remembered. On my last day in Genoa, Ron Slavenas took me by Faith Methodist, where the funeral was held, and by the church cemetery, where Brian's grave is still without a stone. What Ron Slavenas would like to see on the stone is something like "Brian Slavenas, 1972-2003, First Lieutenant, Illinois National Guard, Chinook Pilot, Operation Iraqi Freedom." He assumes that his former wife would have different ideas, and so far he hasn't broached the subject. It's indicative of how different Rosemarie Slavenas's ideas would be that when she heard of her son's death she said, "All the kindness has gone out of the world." If Brian had lived, I think he would have continued to please both of his parents. He wasn't supposed to be frozen as one thing or the other at the age of thirty. He was supposed to live long enough to define himself rather than to be defined by his mother or his father. Parents aren't supposed to have to decide on a headstone for their child. ♦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ANNALS OF INNOVATION

THE SCENT OF THE NILE

Jean-Claude Ellena creates a new perfume.

BY CHANDLER BURR

On a sunny afternoon last June, the French perfumer Jean-Claude Ellena arrived at the offices of Hermès, the luxury-goods maker, in Pantin, just north of Paris, to present his first *essais*—or olfactory sketches—for the company's next perfume. Ellena, who is fifty-seven years old, had recently been named Hermès's first in-house perfumer by Jean-Louis Dumas Hermès, the chairman of the company. Dumas Hermès wanted to fix a delicate problem: Hermès had an elegant perfume collection that included classic scents like Calèche and 24, Faubourg, yet they sold only modestly. Chanel, one of Hermès's chief rivals, made ten times as much money on perfume. (Led by its eighty-three-year-old warhorse, Chanel No. 5, the company's 2003 sales totalled $1.2 billion.) It might be possible for Hermès to make one of its older scents chic through advertising, but the family had chosen a more daring strategy: it would adopt Chanel's approach, and set up its own perfume laboratory. Ellena's mandate was to invent an intimately related family of scents that embodied the aesthetic of Hermès—a distinctly Parisian firm, founded as a saddlery concern on the Rue Basse-du-Rempart in 1837, that is known for its craftsmanship.

What, Ellena wondered, does a real Egyptian garden smell like?

FILIPE JARDIM

The scents sold by fashion houses such as Donna Karan and Christian Dior are not made by Donna Karan and Christian Dior. They are created by independent companies, such as Givaudan, in Switzerland, and Quest International, in the Netherlands. Estée Lauder has long been celebrated for her perfumes, but she did not create them—they were created by professional perfumers. (White Linen, for example, was created by Sophia Grosjman, a senior perfumer at International Flavors & Fragrances, a company based in New York.) Lauder was a discerning and involved client, but saying that she created her own scents is like saying that Pope Julius II painted the Sistine Chapel.

Hermès knew that Chanel's in-house approach had its disadvantages. The house's fragrance collection was limited by the creativity of one man—Jacques Polge, the company's perfumer. Chanel couldn't tap a brilliant new perfumer at, say, Firmenich, a Swiss company. Then again, a fashion house that outsources perfume creation may come up with individual top sellers, but it will find it difficult to amass a collection with a coherent identity. Chanel had a perfumer with a consistent aesthetic, institutional knowledge, a sense of tradition. The Hermès family had taken note when Polge, in 2001, created Coco Mademoiselle, another multimillion-dollar hit.

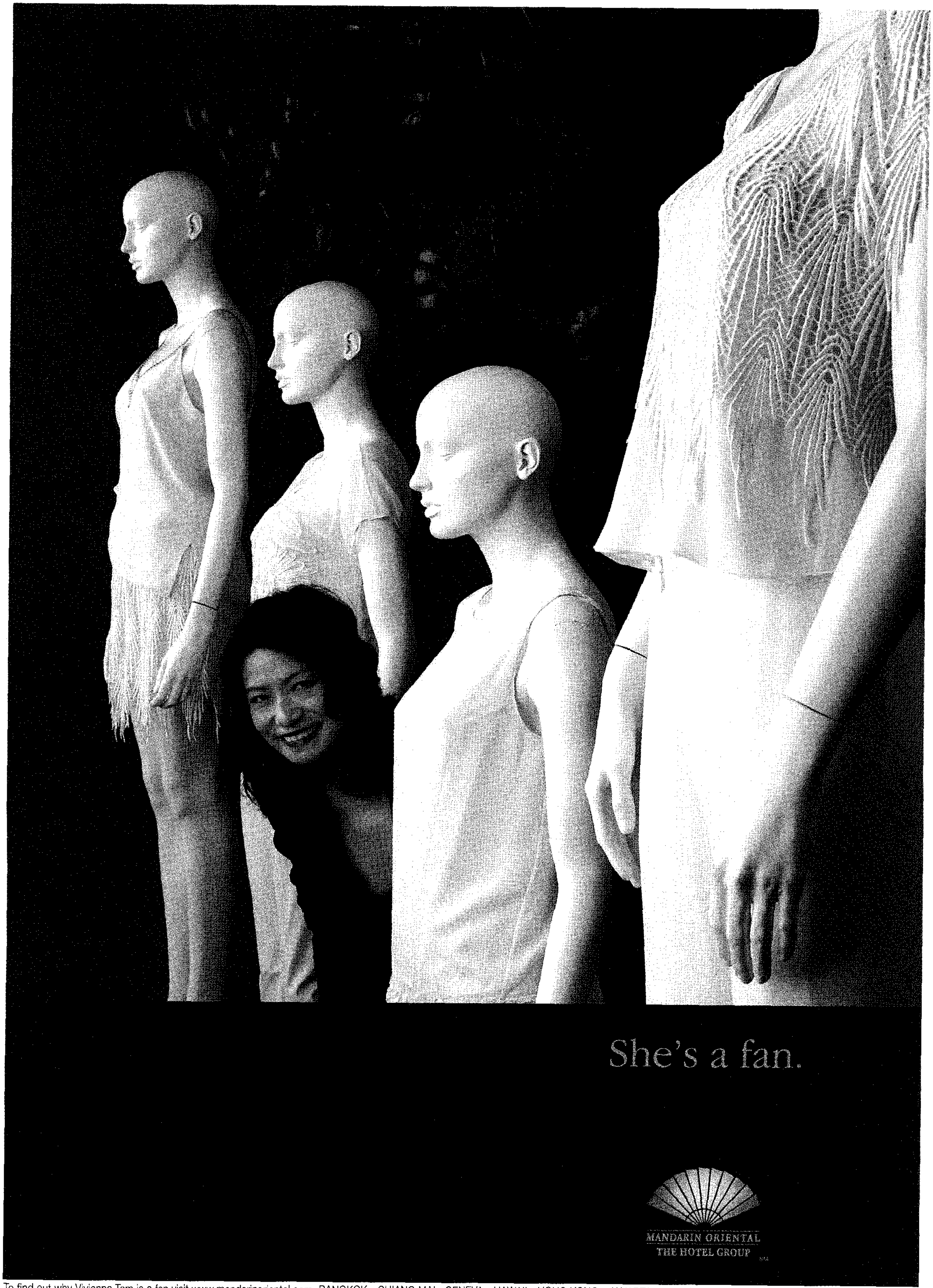
Soon after entering the Hermès offices, Ellena was directed to a room with a large conference table. Hélène Dubrule, the company's international-marketing director for perfume, greeted him. Dubrule, who is thirty-nine years old, has an almost English crispness, and wears tailored clothes. Ellena was wearing his uniform: sports coat, button-down oxford, no tie, khakis. "Ellena" means "the Greek," and he looks the part, although his family is thoroughly French. He is not tall, but he has the confidence of a man who is conscious of being handsome.

Forty-five minutes later, Véronique Gautier, the president of the perfume division, walked in, dressed entirely in Hermès. After ordering tea and coffee from her assistants, Gautier, an elegant woman in her forties with dark hair, chatted briefly with Ellena, careful not to refer to the small glass spray vials that she knew he was carrying in his pocket. The presentation of an *essai* is a vulnerable moment for a perfumer. Ellena's submissions have been greeted with kisses and exclamations of joy. At other times, executives have hurled his creations back at him with fury: "This is shit! Get out, Monsieur Ellena! We have nothing left to say to you!"

Finally, Gautier said, in French, "Good. So what do you have?"

Ellena grinned and reached into his sports-coat pocket. "Three," he said. He placed three spray vials, labelled AG3, AD2, and AD1, on the table. He picked up several *touches*—paper smell strips—sprayed them with scent, and handed them to Gautier and Dubrule.

The women held the *touches* under their noses, and breathed deeply. After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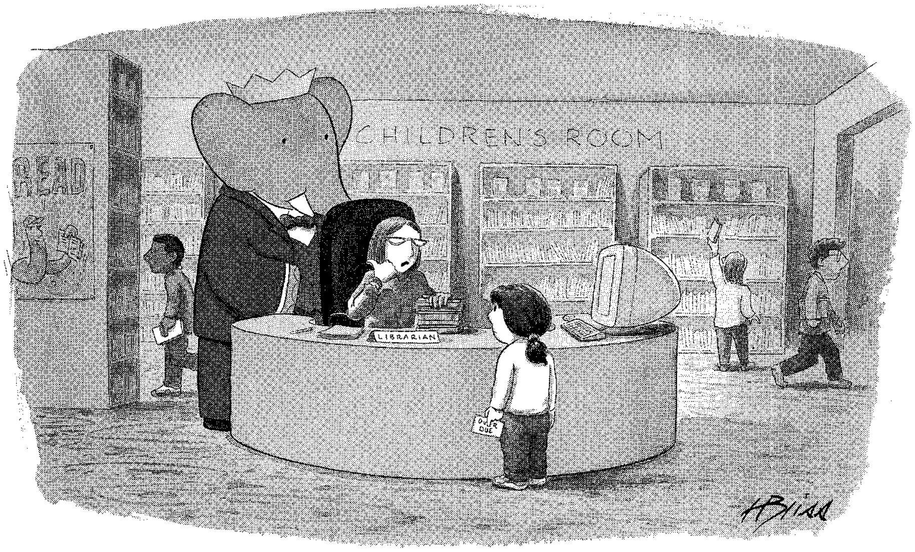


"You pay your late fines or Babar breaks your pinkie."

• •

a moment, Gautier broke the silence. "One of them I like," she declared. "One I don't like *at all*."

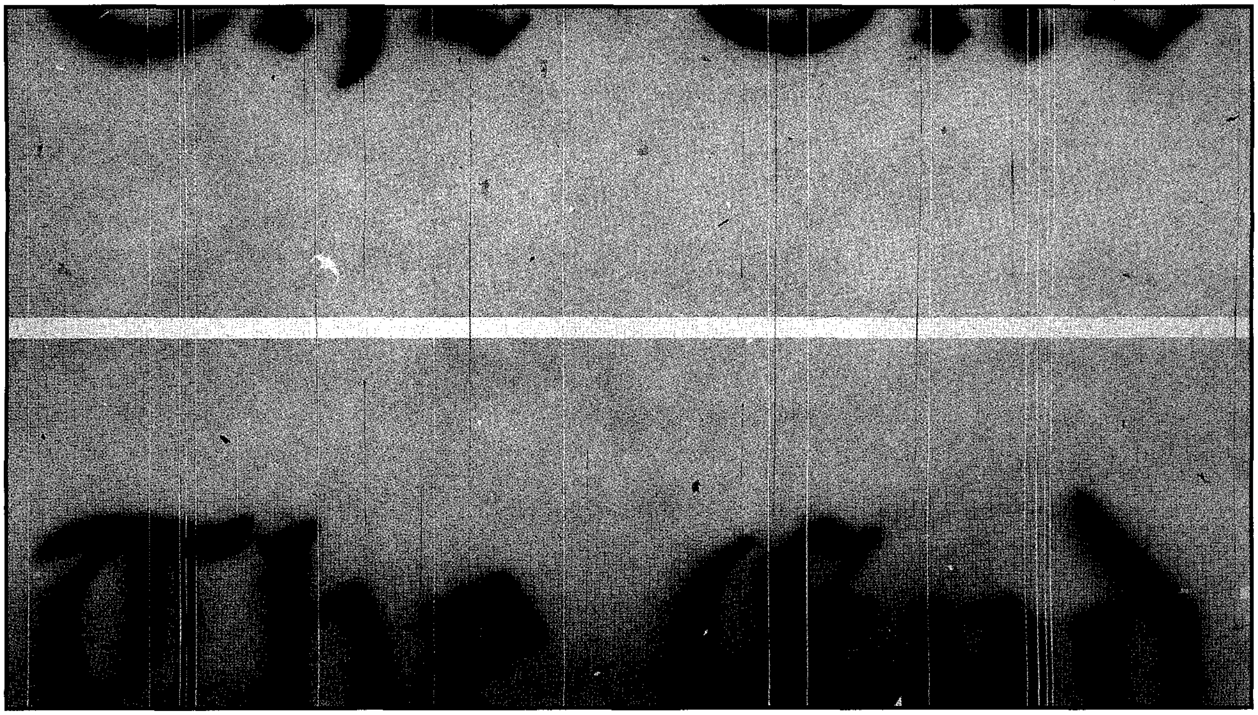
Most perfume houses are based in France, and, as a result, the French dominate the industry. It is an insular and secretive business that remains governed by the solemn idea of the "purity of art." This is spoken of with equal parts pride and cynicism. "French perfumers come from the Sixteenth Arrondissement, and they all have degrees in poetry and commerce from some chic school," one Parisian perfume executive told me. "They consider that what they create is great art, and that, because they are French, the world should come on bended knee and think itself lucky to be blessed with their creations. You talk to a French perfumer, and it's 'My perfumes are wonderful, they lost five million dollars, but who cares, they're objects of art that will live forever and conform to my immortal, pure aesthetic.' "

The market for perfume has been sluggish in recent years. Since 1999, the French market has grown anemically, America's has been flat, and Germany's has shrunk. At the same time, the amount of money spent on perfume advertising has increased: the launch of a new scent often costs tens of millions of dollars, sometimes even more. Every fashion house wants a blockbuster like J'adore, a scent created for Christian Dior by Calice Becker, a perfumer at Quest International; in 2000, the year after its launch, it topped a hundred and twenty million dollars in sales. Yet trying to create the next J'adore is an expensive gamble, for the number of failures greatly exceeds the number of hits. A French perfumer rattled off for me the names of several recent "disasters": Champs-Elysées, by Guerlain; C'est la Vie, by Christian Lacroix; Kingdom, by Alexander McQueen. Moreover, it isn't clear how much profit a success like J'adore actually yields, considering the high marketing and production costs. The perfume industry's accounting methods rival Hollywood's in ingenuity. "You can't always tell a flop, and no one can find out exactly how much a perfume lost, because companies consolidate their figures, although everyone whispers guesses," the perfumer said. "The strategy is that you spend in the first year on ads what you expect to gross in that year." Often, the ratio between advertising and sales fails to balance out. "Chanel's Égoïste, I heard, is a flop, given the amount they spent on advertising," he said.

These days, the creation of a perfume typically begins with a brief: a conceptual description of an imagined new scent, provided to the perfumer by the fashion house. When developing J'adore, executives at Christian Dior told Becker to create something "sexy like a stiletto and as comfortable as a pair of Tod's." Some people blame the brief system for the industry's decline; because the marketers who write briefs now commission and approve scents, they have acquired substantial control over the perfume-creation process. The French executive told me, "Basically, it's 'We want something for women.' O.K., which women? 'Women! All women! It should make them feel more feminine, but strong, and competent, but not too much, and it should work well in Europe and the U.S. and especially in the Asian market, and it should be new but it should be classic, and young women should love it, but older women should love it, too.' If it's a French house, the brief will also say, 'And it should be a great and uncompromised work of art,' and if it's an American brief it will say, 'And it should smell like that Armani thing two years ago that did four million dollars in the first two months in Europe but also like the Givenchy that sold so well in China.' "

The briefs at Hermès are more reserved. Every year, Dumas Hermès comes up with a theme for the fashion house. In 2003, it was the Mediterranean Sea. A year before, Gautier had discussed the project with Ellena, who was then working for Symrise, a German company. He "won the brief"—industry parlance for securing a contract. Gautier and Ellena travelled to Tunisia and paid a visit to the summer home of Leïla Menchari, who designs the window displays in Hermès boutiques. He created a scent that was inspired by Menchari's garden—it suggests warm sunlight splashed with cool water. The perfume was named Un Jardin en Méditerranée, and it became the first scent in a new Hermès collection: the Jardins. For 2005, Dumas Hermès had chosen "river" as the house's theme. At first, Gautier had considered requesting a scent that conjured a garden in the Amazon Basin. She then shifted her imagination to the Ganges. Finally, after consulting Dumas Hermès, Gautier chose the Nile, and a title: Un Jardin sur le Nil. That was the entire brief.

In early May, Gautier, Dubrule, and Ellena flew from France to Egypt. "When I am in the process of creating a perfume, I never know how things will start," Ellena said. "So when they say to me, 'You're coming with us up the Nile,'



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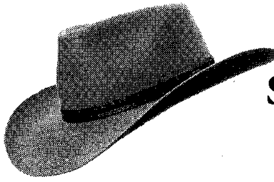
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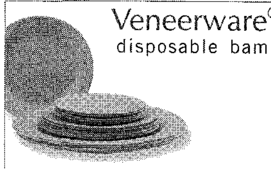
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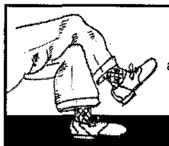
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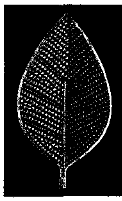
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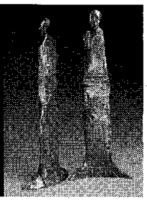
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I find that agonizing. Because, right there, they're delimiting my space. I experience it as a loss.”

Gautier, who evinces certainty when picking up a fork, had complete faith in Ellena. She had called him and said, “The first worked well. You'll do the same for the second.” Nothing, he replied, is guaranteed.

Before the trip, Ellena had engineered a perfume in his head. Egypt inspired inevitable associations: heavy smells, such as incense, thick jasmine, and wood smoke. Yet, he wondered, what does a real Egyptian garden smell like? Dubrule had learned of a large garden in Aswan, called Kitchener, and she decided that they would make a visit during the trip.

Upon arriving in Aswan, the Hermès group checked into the Old Cataract Hotel, whose slightly shabby rooms featured elegant wood porches. Sitting outside, Ellena sniffed the air of the Sahara and found it disconcertingly blank; he was so nervous that he couldn't sleep that night.

In the morning, they went to Kitchener, where there were few flowers in bloom. Gautier, Dubrule, and Ellena were disappointed, but they nevertheless started smelling. They sniffed nasturtium, a salad green with an anodyne watercress scent. Ellena ate some. They tried lantana, a perennial whose flowers smell, rather limply, of banana and passion fruit. They avoided looking at one another. Ellena smelled the flowers of the acacia tree, which have a soft, frangipani-like scent. He turned to Gautier and said, “That's not our story.” She smelled it and agreed, dismissing it in her forceful manner. As Ellena walked through Kitchener, the perfume he had built in his head disintegrated and blew away; now he had nothing.

The group walked around Aswan. The markets were full of spices, and Ellena smelled lotus roots; when macerated in water, the root produces a smell halfway between peony and hyacinth. He also found some *jasmin sambac*, which is full of indoles, molecules that smell overwhelmingly animalic. Feces are rich with indoles, he explained to Gautier and Dubrule, and so are decomposing bodies. It's feminine, the smell of death. Calvin Klein's Eternity is a heavily indolic perfume—the name must have been ironic, he joked. But indoles were not their story, either.

He wrote his observations down in a small orange notebook. Ellena later told me, “The painter learns to see, the pianist learns to listen, I learned to smell. But it's a question of the brain, not of the nose, and you learn it simply by experience. Everyone can smell everything I can smell, but they don't know how to understand it, distinguish elements, or how to speak about it. That's why I'm a perfumer.” He added, “I would say it took ten years to know, twenty to master.”

One morning, Ellena and his companions went for a trip on the Nile in an aged wooden motorboat; ancient ruins on the surrounding rock cliffs loomed over them as Ellena steered the party upstream. The Nile has an opalescent black hue that, in shallow depths, becomes transparent. It has a fresh smell. They motored past wild reeds and feluccas—narrow boats with tall triangular sails—until they reached a small island. Walking ashore, they began following a street that led to a Nubian village. It was during this stroll that Ellena saw, hanging low in the trees that lined the street, plump green mangoes.

The fruit has a complex, authentically exotic smell: it is rich and fresh simultaneously, a rare combination. The scent is also ephemeral. The fruit exudes an odor only when it is on the tree. Once you pick it, the smell deteriorates; within sixty seconds, it is essentially gone. Ellena was beguiled by this elusive fragrance. Green mango, he suggested to his companions, could form the base of Nil.

Dubrule pressed her nose into the branches, finding a hint of apricot and grapefruit. At one point, Gautier frowned; she detected the smell of nail-polish remover. Indeed, green mango contains acetone, the solvent's active ingredient.

“You will, above all, not put nail-polish remover in the perfume!” Dubrule later commanded Ellena.

“Above all!” Gautier concurred.

Ellena promised the women that he wouldn't, knowing full well that he would. Acetone is often used in perfumery, he told me; it provides a lightning-like jolt. He would fold in some acetone, he explained, “but in such a manner that you won't feel it.” Ellena said that he wasn't worried about ignoring his clients' demands. "There's always a *décodage* between what they say and what I am actually constructing," he said.

In the conference room, Gautier slapped the *touche* marked AG3 onto the table. "I reject AG3—very clearly," she said.

Ellena was unruffled. All three concoctions, he said, had been inspired by the Aswan mangoes. "AD2 is more lotusy, whereas AD1 is more woody," he explained. And the rejected AG3? Ellena smiled. "AG3 has magnolia," he said.

Gautier's brow furrowed. "Ah, that doesn't surprise me," she said.

Gautier kept picking up AG3 and saying, "No!," then throwing it down once more. Ellena said of AG3, "I put in a lot of incense." He added with a grin, "And there's something in all of them you'll never guess." The women narrowed their eyes. "Something we talked about in Aswan," Ellena hinted.

"Papyrus?" Dubrule asked.

"*Non*," Ellena said, dismissively.

After some silence, Dubrule said, "*La carotte*?"

"*Oui!*"

When Dubrule had held a green mango outside the Nubian village, she had detected a carroty tinge. "A fruit that smells of a vegetable!" she had exclaimed. Yes, Ellena had replied, you're smelling molecules that are common to both.

Gautier was pleased that Ellena had remembered to include this element in the perfume. "Jean-Claude's specialty is atypical things," she explained to Dubrule, recalling that Ellena had once put essence of tomato leaf in a perfume. She stood up sharply. "Now, on the skin," she said.

Ellena rolled up his sleeves. Dubrule sprayed his forearms with puffs of his three viscous assemblages; they settled onto his skin in small slicks.

"They smell completely different," Dubrule said, hovering over Ellena's outstretched arms.

"Completely," Ellena said.

"*Much* less mango," Dubrule said.

The women smelled the three fragrances several more times, glancing at each other. "It's strange," Dubrule said grimly. "Almost the reverse of the *touche*." This phenomenon, in fact, causes significant difficulty for perfumers. The great Guerlain perfumes—Aimé Guerlain created the first, Jicky, in 1889—were all tested exclusively on human skin, never on paper. They were expressly built to blossom and fade, over time, on the body. Today's customers, however, don't want five fragrances on their body at the same time; they prefer to sample perfumes on paper strips. As a result, most perfumes today are constructed to smell good, for a few seconds, on a paper strip—which is a perversion, unless you happen to be made of paper. Indeed, many of today's perfumes don't last (Kenneth Cole's Black vanishes as quickly as a picked green mango), and they often clash with the body's natural smells.

Gautier's nose moved once more over Ellena's warm skin. "I prefer AD2 on skin," she said.

"It's AD2," Ellena agreed, lightly.

Dubrule was definitive. "It's AD2," she said. After a pause, she added, "I'm finding a lot of rose in it. It's not bad—it will just need adjusting."

"It's the lotus," Ellena said. "I'll fine-tune that."

"This works perfectly for Hermès," Gautier concluded. She did have one concern: would men be able to wear it? Both she and Ellena wanted Hermès to dispense with the archaic division between masculine and feminine scents—a mere marketing device designed to make heterosexual men comfortable with the idea of wearing fragrance. Though Gautier was, wisely, cautious of being too radical for the market, she nevertheless had decided that the Jardins collection would be unisex.

Dubrule reminded Ellena that Hermès was aiming to have settled on the formula of the "juice"—the industry term for a scent—by July 10th. (The European Union has a list of banned toxins and allergens and is constantly adding perfume ingredients to it.) Meanwhile, Gautier stared at the transparent *essai*. "Do we need to color it?" she asked.

Dubrule considered the question. "No," she said.

"Good," Gautier said. "We're pretty happy—*non*?" She didn't really mean it as a question, but it nevertheless sounded like one.

After the meeting, Ellena returned to his home, in Grasse, on the Côte d'Azur, and went to his former office at Symrise. (Hermès had not yet provided him with a lab, and Symrise had agreed

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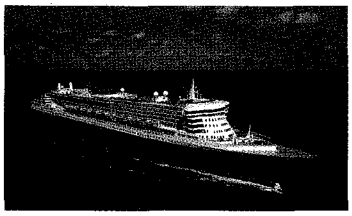

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to let him rent his old space.) He soon received a call from Gautier. "*AD2 sent bon*," she said—it smelled good. Yet, she continued, changes were required. She and Dubrule liked the scent's spiky freshness, but Dubrule thought that it was a bit harsh—too much like grapefruit. Both women thought that *la persistance*, the amount of time the fragrance lasts on skin, needed to be lengthened. And they wanted the smell of green mango to be more present on the skin. Good luck, Gautier said. Ellena was encouraged. "I have no anguish once I've got to the '*Ça sent bon*,' " he told me.

At Symrise, Ellena had access to more than a thousand ingredients—some natural, some synthetic. He used only a fraction of them. Ellena is a minimalist in materials and a maximalist in thought. Over the years, he has refined a sort of Bauhaus School approach to perfumery: clean scents made from deceptively simple chemical formulas.

Ellena's best-known fragrances are Eau Parfumée au Thé Vert, for Bulgari, and First, for Van Cleef & Arpels. Just before joining Hermès, he had created L'Eau d'Hiver for Frédéric Malle's élite collection, Éditions de Parfums. The scent was inspired by an aspect of the great 1906 Guerlain perfume Après l'Ondée. He said, "The problem—well, you can't say there's a problem with Après l'Ondée—but, *bon*, *voilà*, it is too opulent. Guerlain is baroque: put this in, and this, and this." On the other hand, he said admiringly, the Guerlain scent had a marvellous *sillage*—the olfactory wake that trails behind a wearer of perfume. Someone once defined *sillage* to me, rather metaphysically, as the sense of a person being present in the room after she has left. Creating a *sillage* that is potent but not overpowering is tricky. With L'Eau d'Hiver, Ellena said, he wanted to pay homage to the Guerlain scent's *sillage*—"but in enlightened form." He selected elements from Après l'Ondée that were "soft, comfortable, light." One of these was the natural essence of hay. He took some *aubépine*, an olfactory blend of finger paint and the wax used to clean linoleum floors, and added it to methyl ionone, a synthetic whose smell suggests iris. He then added a few more ingredients, including a natural distillation of honey. It took him two years to perfect his formula, which in the end contained twenty ingredients—very few, for a perfume. L'Eau d'Hiver smells, delightfully, of ground white pepper and cold seawater, with a touch of fresh crab. And it has a *sillage* worthy of Guerlain.

A master perfumer like Ellena has memorized hundreds, if not thousands, of recipes for manufacturing smells. Many complex natural scents can be conjured with only a few ingredients. The scent of freesia, he explained, is created by combining two simple molecules: beta-ionone and linalool, both synthetics. (To give freesia a cold, metallic edge, a touch of allyl amyl glycolate is added.) The smell of orange blossom is made by combining linalool and methyl anthranilate, which smells like Concord grapes.

In my presence, Ellena once dipped a *touche* into a molecule called isobutyl phenal acetate, which has a purely chemical smell, and another *touche* into vanillin, a synthetic version of vanilla. He placed the two paper strips together, waved them, and chocolate appeared in the air. "My métier is to find shortcuts to express as strongly as possible a smell," he explained. "For chocolate, nature uses eight hundred molecules. I use two." He handed me four *touches*—vanillin plus the natural essences of cinnamon, orange, and lime. The combined smell was a precise simulation of Coca-Cola. "With me, one plus one equals three," Ellena said. "When I add two things, you get much more than two things."

Even though Ellena's perfumes often evoke the smells of nature, he believes that scents containing only natural materials are not, fundamentally, perfumes. The art of perfumery, Ellena believes, is the art of gracefully combining different chemicals, some natural, some synthetic. The first perfume synthetics were created in the nineteenth century. Aldehydes, which were synthesized in the eighteen-eighties, are the key to Chanel No. 5, giving the scent its powdery, soapy, luxurious signature. Synthetics such as ambroxan, which boosts wood and amber notes in perfumes, and karanal, which adds a strong woody accent, are regularly used in fragrances.

Ellena is proud to be an illusionist. "Picasso said, 'Art is a lie that tells the truth,' " he told me. "That's perfume for me. I lie. I create an illusion that is actually stronger than reality. Sketch a tree: it's completely false, yet everyone understands it." The point of Un Jardin sur le

Nil, he said, was not to reproduce the scent of a green mango but, rather, to create a fantasy version of green mango.

On the flight back from Aswan, Ellena had jotted down a formula of thirteen ingredients, which had become his rough sketch for AD2. A natural essence of bitter orange, he had decided, would simulate the freshness of the green mango. And a synthetic grapefruit would evoke mango's acidity. (Perfumers don't use natural grapefruit, because it contains many sulfur atoms, which disintegrate to form malodors; the synthetic also has better *persistance*.) He would also add rosin, the resin that musicians rub on violin bows. Of his original thirteen ingredients, he eventually eliminated two. Opopanax, a synthetic that he had expected to produce a resinous smell, ended up evoking mushrooms. Another chemical, lionone, was supposed to help convey the smell of mango, but it interacted with the other materials to create the illusion of apricot. He had replaced the lionone with carrot, and it had worked: AD2.

Now he began responding to Gautier's criticisms of AD2. He added several elements that, when combined, would heighten the scent of mango: hedione, a synthetic that simulates jasmine; methyl anthranilate, which is used prominently in Calvin Klein's Eternity; and neroli oil, which is derived from sour-orange flowers. Ellena documented the formula of his updated AD2: he gave the name and product code for each material; he detailed how many millilitres of each ingredient were used in making the juice; and he listed the price of each ingredient, per litre.

He then created three additional variants of the original AD2, which his lab assistant mixed and lined up on his desk in tiny vials: AJ1, AJ2, AJ3. He smelled them on the *touches*, and was dissatisfied. All were too citrusy. He lowered the grapefruit synthetic in all of them; to all except AJ3, he added varying amounts of hexanal trans 2, a synthetic that smells simultaneously of golden apple and glue paste. He smelled his iterations again. "At the moment, I like AJ3," he told me. "It's the freshest."

On June 11th, Ellena drove to Laboratoires Monique Rémy, a small company in Grasse that is one of the most rarefied suppliers of natural per-

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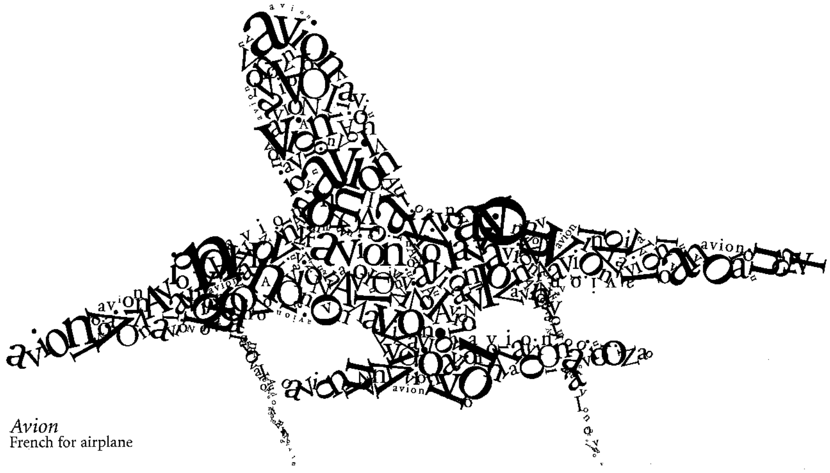

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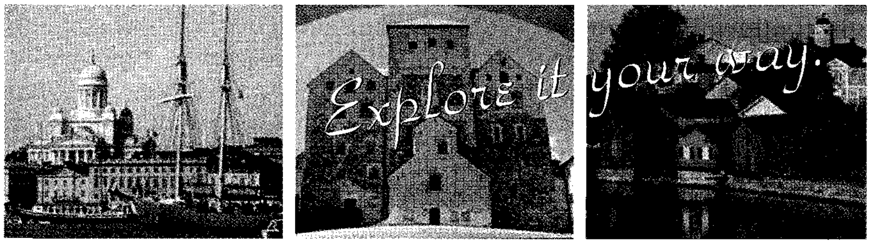

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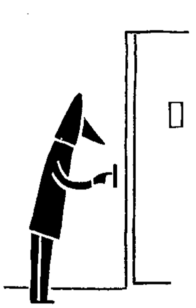
fume ingredients. L.M.R. supplies Chanel's perfume division with dozens of exclusive materials that no other house can obtain. For the wider perfume market, the company produces a distillation of tuberose—a flower that blooms on agave plants—that is one of the most beautiful scents ever created. If you need a basil, the company can supply you with a Basilic Essence, for thirty dollars per pound, or a Basilic Grand Vert Absolue, at five hundred dollars per pound. The company's most expensive ingredient, Iris Naturelle Absolue, costs twenty thousand dollars per pound.

"This is the first time I come here as Hermès," Ellena said, parking his Citroën outside the L.M.R. factory. He squinted at the building. "We'll see how they treat me." For years, the company has supplied Hermès with several of the ingredients for 24, Faubourg, including distillations of orange blossom, rose, and iris.

Frédérique Rémy, Monique's daughter and the firm's commercial director, is an attractive, direct young woman with dark hair. "*Félicitations!*" Rémy said, smiling. She has known Ellena for years; they are both natives of Grasse. They put on heavy protective glasses—corrosive solvents are used in the distilling of perfume essences—and chatted animatedly as she took him on a tour of the factory floor. (Rémy despises the glasses, which are required by French law; she kept taking them off, and at one point said, "Jean-Claude, can't you get Hermès Eyewear to do something in these?" Ellena said that he'd look into it.) The machines were huge. Some have blades to hash grains and roots; the essence of iris, for example, is obtained from the root, not from the flower. Other L.M.R. machines make essences: odorant molecules are distilled from a flower or a fruit rind with steam at two hundred and twelve degrees Fahrenheit. It takes ten tons of oranges to create a thousand pounds of bitter-orange essence, which Rémy typically imports from the Ivory Coast. Still other machines create absolutes: smells are obtained with volatile solvents at around eighty-six degrees. The two methods extract two somewhat different groups of molecules. A rose essence includes the material's top notes. A rose absolute gives you the base notes.



Ellena began his career among these machines as a teen-ager, extracting jasmine. His boss had a Ph.D. in chemistry and taught Ellena the science of scent. By taking just one sniff of a jasmine essence or absolute, he can tell you not only the flower's country of origin but what kind of machine distilled it—stainless steel, aluminum, or steel.

A few companies, such as Chanel and Malle, continue to demand costly materials—the juice for Chanel No. 19, which contains an absolute of iris, supposedly costs a thousand dollars per pound—but the quality and expense of the materials that other fashion houses are willing to use have been plunging in recent years. The average cost of a perfume formula has dropped considerably in the past decade or so. Fashion houses set the maximum price of a juice when submitting their briefs. According to perfume experts I spoke with, the standard price for ingredients used to be about a hundred dollars per pound, but clients now often require that the juice cost no more than fifty dollars per pound.

Hermès is committed to giving Ellena creative liberty, and he would be allowed to decide which supplier's materials would be used in the company's new perfumes. Ellena was considering adding narcissus to the base for Nil, and he had heard that L.M.R. had created a new version of narcissus, called *absolue narcisse de distillation moléculaire*. (The company tends proprietary fields of narcissus in the center of France.) Rémy took him to the stockroom, a long and low-ceilinged room that was lined with refrigerators. She brought out the absolute of narcissus and set it before him. He leaned over and inhaled. She watched him carefully. It was a beautiful scent, with a raw green hint—and it was, he realized, wrong for Nil. It was not sufficiently tender. He got in his car, went back to his lab, and thought, That won't work. Now what am I going to do?

Throughout the summer, Ellena continued to experiment, accenting one ingredient, eliminating another. He was pensive but not worried. "For the moment, I'm floating," he said. "Maybe the answer is already in the perfume. Often, you just need to turn up something already in there."

At the same time that Ellena, Gautier, and Dubrule were trying to perfect the juice for Nil, they were attempting to answer a grander question: What is an Hermès perfume? If you are Stella McCartney, you do not worry about history and tradition and craftsmanship. You launch Stella, which is a pleasant, millimetre-deep fashion fragrance—it has no *persistance*, no *sillage*, and no reference to anything other than its marketing team's sense of the cultural pulse. But, at Hermès, Gautier had an entire collection, not a single fragrance, to worry about. The existing collection lacked a signature—an over-all stylistic coherence. Its scent Bel Ami was imbued with leather, which made sense, but what did the citrus notes of its perfume Eau d'Orange Verte have to do with Hermès? "Obviously, Hermès is leather," Yves de Chiris, an independent perfume consultant, told me. "But how do you make leather friendly to the twenty-first century? It's a problem. Maybe there should be a very subtle leather note in each perfume that says, 'I am Hermès,' that underlies but doesn't lead. That might lend coherence."

A signature is a difficult thing to create. Giorgio Armani perfumes have one of the industry's cleanest signatures—a matte smoothness, the olfactory equivalent of brushed platinum. Ellena had been thinking about the signature problem. Many perfumers believed that a signature did not have to be something as literal as adding a specific note to each new scent. Indeed, a signature could be more subtle—an expression of temperament. One perfumer described the Hermès brand to me as elegant and respectful. Good taste. Jean-Michel Duriez, the in-house perfumer for Jean Patou, described Hermès to me as "restraint, delicacy, refinement." Another Parisian perfume executive suggested that Hermès's 24, Faubourg, with its subdued floral scent, best represented the house's conservative ethic. "*Verrouillé à tous les étages*," she said of the scent—every floor locked tight. The perfumes in the Jardin collection, which were delicate rather than lurid, fit the house's aesthetic well, Ellena believed.

Another way to link Nil to other Hermès fragrances, Gautier and Dubrule had decided, was through bottle

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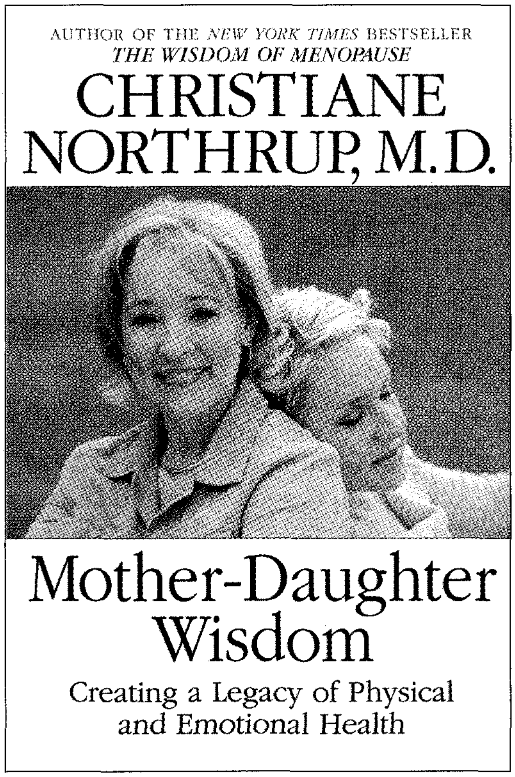

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design. As with other perfumes in the Jardins collection, the bottle for Nil would be identical in shape to that of Calèche, one of Hermès's most popular perfumes: a slim sheath of glass, with a rectangular profile, gently rounded edges, and a thick, heavy bottom. To distinguish Nil, the bottle would be tinted green—a nod to the Aswan mangoes.

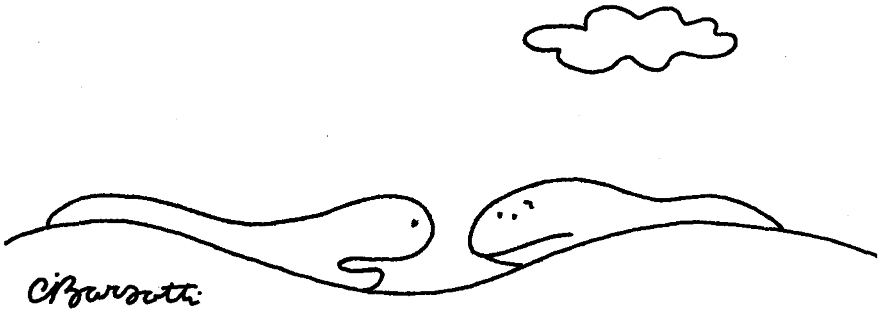
In 2003, Hermès, a quintessentially Right Bank company, had placed Jean-Paul Gaultier, the French designer known for his avant-garde sensibility, in charge of its women's collections. Choosing Gaultier was, in some ways, a savvy move for the staid company, but it was a risk. Hermès had been the fashion house preferred by Madame de Guermantes, whereas Gaultier was more the type to appeal to J. Lo. (Then again, in 2002 J. Lo had launched her own perfume, Glow, sales of which have exceeded eighty million dollars.) Ellena was not interested in competing with J. Lo. Indeed, he was pointedly dismissive of commercial concerns. "I'm certain that AJ2 would be the most commercial," he said when I visited him in mid-June. He then added quickly, "But I never take a position on the commercialness." He smelled his *essais* again. "I'm pretty happy with the *sillage* in these. The problem is still the *persistance*." He paused. "But I'll find the answer." He paused again. "I *hope* I'll find the answer."

Ellena interrogated his four *essais* again and again, and finally devised a single scent, AJ, that combined elements of all of them. When he presented AJ to Gautier and Dubrule, their response was tentative. The perfume was lovely, they said, and you could tell that it had been carefully constructed. Yet they were concerned that it might be too citrusy. More important, they weren't sure that AJ was "perfumey" enough—which is typically shorthand for saying that it lacked aldehydes. Gautier and Dubrule told Ellena to keep AJ's enlivening freshness but asked him to give it more body.

So Ellena created AS, which was more flowery and fruity, with a bit more ripe mango. Gautier didn't really like it, finding it too easy. As she put it, it was too "sixteen-year-old girl." Dubrule found it pleasing at first, then tried it on her skin and pronounced it too sweet, lacking a certain elegance. And so Ellena returned to his lab, balancing millilitres of molecules against millilitres of other molecules. He began creating A*.

For Ellena, A* marked a gentle turn toward the woods. Among the natural materials, he lowered the citrus and excised a third of the bitter orange, then welded on a few Monique Rémy materials, including an incense redolent of pine trees, which costs nearly a hundred dollars per pound, and an absolute of honey, which costs a thousand dollars per pound. When, in 1976, Ellena had created the perfume First—his first perfume—he had used a hundred and sixty ingredients. There were thirty in A*. He smelled it. It was green mango, the very instant before being picked, though it was not the fruit itself. It was an idea he had created of green mango, a dreamy abstraction. And its *sillage* suggested the unblemished peel of the freshest, greenest sweet fruit.

In August, he returned to Paris and presented A* to Gautier and Dubrule. It was almost a month after the initial deadline. The European press launch for Nil had been set for January, and the product—which would cost a hundred and twenty-five dollars for a hundred-millilitre bottle—needed to be in U.S. stores in February. For weeks, Ellena heard nothing. Finally, Gautier telephoned him. A* smelled fantastic, she said, and it had more body and lasted longer than previous iterations. "It's always 'Longer, longer, longer,' " Ellena said, chuckling. "She's terrible about that."


"We're slugs—we don't have a creation myth."

By late summer, Ellena was installed in his new lab. With Gautier's blessing, he had chosen to set up his workspace in an opulent glass-walled house outside the medieval French town of Cabris. The modernist house, which resembles a James Bond hideaway, is in a pine forest. In the living room, where he placed his simple wooden desk, there is a view of the distant Mediterranean. The chairs are upholstered with ostrich skin.

"Today, as far as I'm concerned, Un Jardin sur le Nil is finished," Ellena said, though he was still tweaking it, "just for the pleasure."

In his new lab, which he placed in one of the bedrooms, he had installed around two hundred and twenty ingredients. He had never even used a hundred of them, he said. He shrugged. "They are there because . . . *peut-être.* One day. Like a word in a dictionary. You have it. I have a tiny dictionary. I use few words." He continued, "I want to master what I'm doing. Mastering means that for each word, every material in the formula, I know why it's there."

Ellena was now finishing work on a luxurious new collection of scents that would be called the Hermèssences. In Paris, Dubrule had told me that wearing an Hermèssence would be like dining with Pierre Gagnaire or Guy Savoy—"great French chefs who are going to search out unexpected contrasts. We will be able to use some very Hermès materials." By this, she meant expensive. Her culinary description was metaphorical, but, in fact, Ellena was creating a scent called Ambre Narguilé—a *narguilé* is a water pipe—which smells of sliced apples wrapped in leaves of blond tobacco and drizzled with caramel, cinnamon, banana, and rum. And on his desk was a vial that contained the beginning of the next Hermèssence. It smelled, he said, like a leather bathing suit emerging from a swimming pool. He was working on a scent that smelled like leather sprinkled with sugar. His goal at Hermès, he said, was "to show that the perfume is not the result of chance but a reflection of a reasoned process." He made a series of stepping motions with his hand, squinting at a target ahead. "When you start out, it's more about your passions. At the end, it's intellectual." ♦

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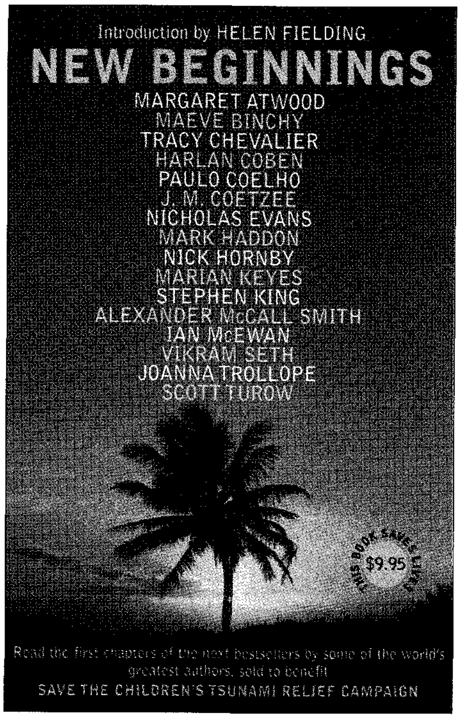

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BACKSTAGE NOTES

HANDS AND EYES

When Dolce met Gabbana.

BY JOHN SEABROOK

Milan was cold and foggy, and although it was still midafternoon when I arrived outside the Dolce & Gabbana showroom, at 7 Via Santa Cecilia, the January day was already growing dark. The city had been under a blanket of subalpine fog for days, and the air was brown and felt gluey, as though the mist and trapped smog were congealing.

This was the last of three days of fittings for the Dolce & Gabbana winter, 2005, men's show, which would be staged the following afternoon, in the courtyard next to the showroom. It was to be a big show, with eighty-six outfits, or "exits," to be worn by sixty models. Several dozen of those models were occupying the floor of the cramped lobby area at 7 Santa Cecilia, huddled so close to one another that it was necessary to thread a path through them in order to reach the receptionist's desk. Many wore headphones, and their heads were bobbing gently. They looked serious and introspective, as though they were psyching themselves up for the big game.

Upstairs in a large, high-ceilinged atelier, a short bald man was busily, almost manically, fitting the models with the clothes they would wear in the show, one at a time. A row of pins was stuck into the front of his left trouser leg, and the handle of a pair of scissors protruded from his right front pocket. This was Domenico Dolce, the forty-six-year-old part owner of Dolce & Gabbana. His posture was peculiar to tailors around the world—a sort of crouch that permits the hands to range from the trouser hems to the waistband to the shoulders and collar with a minimum of additional bending and reaching. The hands were working over the garments in a blur, pinning, stitching, nipping and tucking, and always finishing with a little pat. As the hands worked, the legs described tight circles around the standing model, sometimes moving forward, sometimes backward. The models towered over Dolce, their heads far removed from the whirl of tailoring going on below.

Sitting languidly on the other side of the room, ignoring Dolce, was a tall man in camouflage pants and an olive-green V-necked sweater, worn over a navy-blue collared shirt. His clothes had the casual appearance that is often the result of careful calculation. He was thin and deeply tanned, and had a heavy-lidded expression that was not tired or bored, exactly, but profoundly listless. This was Stefano Gabbana, Dolce's forty-two-year-old partner. When he rested his forehead in his hand, a small

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Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana: Their look is as much about attitude as about clothes. Photograph by Stefano De Luigi.

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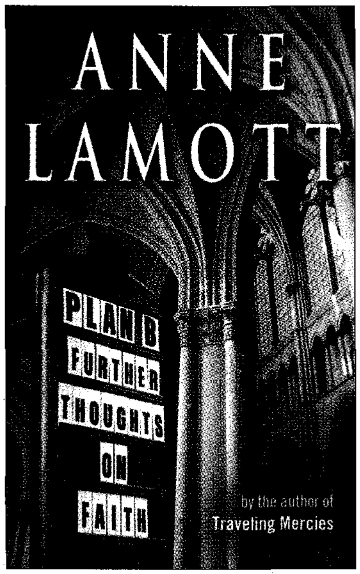

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—*Publishers Weekly*
(starred review)

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tattooed cross could be seen on the back of his neck, emerging above his shirt collar, part of a more elaborate tattoo below.

The designers had been working on this collection since August. Dolce does almost all of the tailoring, first sketching the outfits, and then slowly building up prototypes in muslin, on dozens of mannequins around his studio. Gabbana helps with selecting the fabric and deciding on the over-all feeling of a collection, but his essential contribution to the creative process doesn't come into play until the fittings start. Gabbana's expertise lies not in the making but in the judging of an outfit, and his work is performed in an instant—that instant in which an outfit makes its impression. He is the eyes for Dolce's hands. Now the eyes looked starved; they seemed to require regular servings of fresh imagery to keep them animated. It was as though denial were sharpening their appetite for the moment when, at a signal from Dolce, they would be turned loose on the outfit.

Dolce and Gabbana sound like their clothes. They talk about their work in the same way they do it. Dolce starts a point, Gabbana embroiders the facts with color, spinning the anecdotes out, and then Dolce rounds the discussion off with a nip and a tuck.

Gabbana: "I like clothes, but not so much to touch them. I don't want to spend too much time on one pair of clothes."

Dolce: "He has a very quick eye."

Gabbana: "I have to like the image, then I just want to move on. Domenico is a perfectionist."

Dolce: "I like to feel the clothes."

The sartorial dimension of that conversation was evident in the eighty-six outfits hanging on movable metal racks around three sides of the room, next to their respective accessories, which were neatly packaged in slim clear plastic bags, like kids' snacks. There were the dark conservative suits and overcoats of Dolce's Sicilian heritage, and there was also a fox-fur coat with patchwork camouflage details—a look that was decidedly more Gabbana. There were thirteen kinds of jeans in the collection: denim is the fabric in which the designers' diverse personalities are most successfully reconciled. The jeans had splashes of paint, studs, snakeskin inserts, and embroidery, and were worn and abraded in a variety of ways. Indeed, the exquisite distressing of the fabric is almost as time-consuming and costly as the embroidering of it; workers make most of the holes by hand, cutting the denim with knives and rubbing it with pumice stones. But, no matter how ornamental the jeans are, they all fit in the same classic, unflashy way. For Dolce & Gabbana, the impulse toward excess is always straining against the boundaries of good tailoring.

Dolce and Gabbana are becoming to the two-thousands what Prada was to the nineteen-nineties and Armani was to the nineteen-eighties—*gli stilisti* whose sensibility defines the decade. In 2003, the designers sold more products in Italy—clothes, sunglasses, perfume, underwear, watches, jewelry—than any other fashion house. And although the house is still only half the size of Armani in world-wide sales, it is catching up fast. (Last year, the company passed Versace in total sales.) Dolce & Gabbana is the anti-Armani. Giorgio Armani discovered a way of exporting a distinctively Italian style—the sleek, gray-toned aesthetic of Italian industrial design—to America by linking it to cinematic notions of glamour. In doing so, he taught Hollywood how to dress Italian. Dolce and Gabbana absorbed this triumph and, a decade later, reversed it: they taught Italians how to look Hollywood.

It would be hard to gauge Dolce & Gabbana's contribution to fashion history by pointing to a silhouette or a form the designers have changed, or a fabric they have pioneered. In their women's clothes, they have always favored the full-figured woman over the skinny, mannish silhouettes of minimalists such as Prada, Jil Sander, and Helmut Lang, but this is hardly revolutionary. Perhaps the best place to see their influence is on the sidewalks of any Italian city—low-slung flared jeans that drag on the pavement, worn with a studded belt, a knitted skull-cap, sunglasses, and jewelry, underwear showing above the waistband. Their look is as much about attitude as about clothes—pants with lots of pockets, buttons, and zippers, plus a drawstring and some dangling straps, buckles, studs, and large metallic logos. (You don't want to

RETREAT

The city abandoned, its citizens fled.
A paper chain hung on the wall left standing.
A single flip-flop graced the hard-packed floor.
The rest diminishes their loss: these were barracks
and yesterday the men tried to blow a hole
through me as I squatted up the road
taking note of their grim frenzy,
like termites, no, more like tiny sailors
from a different time, when war came
over water and the battle arrived at a delay.
There was nothing to do but watch the enemy
grow from blot to galleon; colors nailed
to the mast. Like the bright orange flashing
we hung on the car's hood that said to the sky,
don't bomb us we are your friends.
These others, they had no friends in the sky.

—*Eliza Griswold*

get stuck behind a Dolce & Gabbana fan when going through an airport metal detector.) These are clothes to brighten listless glances.

"D'*accordo*," Dolce called out, and that was Gabbana's signal to look. His eyes inhaled the outfit. He unfolded his long limbs and rose from his chair. If he didn't like something, he would say "*No*" immediately. Dolce rarely argued, and, if he tried, Gabbana would wag his finger and shake his head, and say "*No*" again.

This time the verdict was "*Sì*." The model was wearing jeans, a belt with a big "DG" logo on the buckle, and no shirt. Gabbana walked around behind him, nodding approvingly at the fit. Then he scooped a few pieces of jewelry from the baskets of bling that were on a table behind him and draped them over the model's chest.

"*Perfetto*," Gabbana said, and sat down to await the next model.

Unlike the Guccis, Pradas, Puccis, Zegnas, Ferragamos, and Fendis, Dolce and Gabbana do not come from families with long pedigrees in the production and sale of luxury goods—one of those families which occupy quasi-noble status within the Italian fashion hierarchy. They began as outsiders, with their noses pressed to the windows of the fashion world. Their business and their distinctive style are based not so much on family history and artisanal traditions as on their relationship with each other. And the only reason that Dolce and Gabbana are creative and business partners at all is that they were romantic partners first.

Dolce was born in 1958, and grew up in the town of Polizzi Generosa, near Palermo, in Sicily. His father, Saverio, was a *sarto*—a tailor—and his mother, Sara, sold fabric and clothing in the local emporium. His father made clothes for both men and women, for all occasions, from the heavy woollen coats worn by the gentry when on horseback to the black velvet peasant caps worn by their estate workers. He also made a wide variety of undergarments, from men's sleeveless T-shirts to women's bras, girdles, corsets, and petticoats. If there was a wedding in town, he would make the dress for the bride and the suits for the groomsmen. Seasons in the Dolce household were marked by the weights of the fabrics that the family worked with: linen for summer; velvet, gabardine, and light wool for fall; heavy wool for winter; cotton for spring. In all Dolce's memories of his youth, he always sees weather and fabric together: the way the light looked on the cloth. At night, the clothes that his father was working on hung from overhead racks

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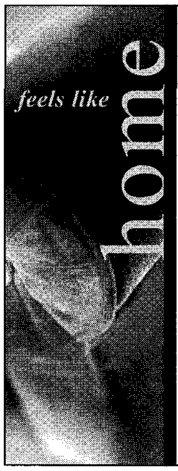

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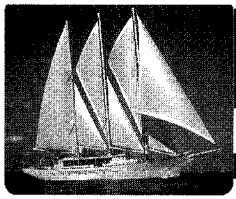

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in his shop, and they loomed large in the boy's imagination.

Dolce: "I made my own pants when I was six years old."

Gabbana: "Like for a doll."

Dolce: "I make all the clothes in my father's shop."

Gabbana: "You see? He is a genius. I am not like him."

Gabbana was born in Milan in 1962. His father worked in a printing factory, and his mother ironed for a laundry service.

Gabbana: "Fashion and luxury were not what my family talked about at home. The only designer I care about was Fiorucci."

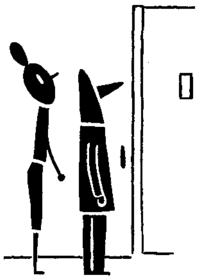
Dolce: "Who wasn't even a designer."

Gabbana: "More like a graphic artist who works in clothes."

Dolce: "A style-maker."

Gabbana: "I didn't know!"

Gabbana's main interests as a teenager were "pop music, going dancing, riding my *motorino* around, and acting crazy. I wore a Lacoste shirt, Levi's, and Ray-Bans, the original green ones with gold frames, and boots with a square toe, but not Frye. And I have lovers," he added gravely. "Many *lofers*." (I thought for a moment he meant "loafers," and wondered how many pairs a guy can have.) Gabbana's memories are a dazzle of color, light, and speed—life as seen from the saddle of a *motorino*. (He still rides a *motorino* around Milan, and you can often spot it—it's the one painted in leopard print—parked on the sidewalk of Via Goldoni, outside the company's magnificent glass-sheathed office building.) He studied graphic design in high school but wasn't much of a student, and on completing his studies he needed a job. A friend suggested the fashion business.



This was the early eighties, the dawn of the Italian-designer-ready-to-wear era. In 1982, Giorgio Armani was on the cover of *Time*, partly as a result of the success of the film "American Gigolo," in which Richard Gere could be seen on movie screens cavorting in Armani while Deborah Harry sang "Roll me in designer sheets, I'll never get enough."

Dolce was already in Milan. He had enrolled in a three-year course in fashion design at the Marangoni Institute but dropped out after four months, because he realized that he already knew everything the school had to teach. His dream was to work for Armani, whom he had never met. One day, without making an appointment, he carried his book of sketches over to Armani's headquarters, on Via Durini. Inside the door, there was a long white carpet leading to the receptionist's desk. Dolce wasn't sure if he should walk on it with his shoes on. "I am such a *cretino*," he says. "I know nothing." He decided that he would look ridiculous appearing at the front desk without shoes, so he approached by sidling along the wall, where he could step without sullying the carpet. He doesn't know if Armani ever saw the sketches.

Dolce found a job as an assistant to a designer named Giorgio Correggiari. One night at a club, he met a kid named Gabbana. Dolce, quiet and shy, was impressed with Gabbana's good looks and outgoing personality; Gabbana wasn't so taken with Dolce, but he was happy to hear his advice on how to approach Correggiari for a job. Correggiari ended up hiring Gabbana to work on sportswear, and Dolce taught him how to sketch and the basics of tailoring, and in the process they became a couple. By 1983, they had parted ways with Correggiari and were living together in a one-room loft in Milan. The room had a round, wobbly wooden table in the middle, and they would sketch sitting across from each other. If one erased too hard, the table would jiggle and spoil the other's line.

Dolce: "We always filed two different invoices for the freelance work we did, even when we were working for the same client."

Gabbana: "Our accountant said, 'Why not just do one invoice for both of you? Put Dolce and Gabbana at the top.'"

So the brand was born, the brainchild of a Milanese bookkeeper.

In 1985, Dolce & Gabbana was one of six new talents chosen to design pieces for the Milan shows. As a result, the designers were able to persuade a factory in Piedmont to make the clothes for their own collection.

Dolce: "I am getting up at five to do

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RYAN ARTZBERGER AS PERICLES, MICHELLE SHUPE AS DIANA AND JONATHAN WIENER AS AN ENSEMBLE MEMBER IN THE SHAKESPEARE THEATRE'S 2004 PRODUCTION OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S "PERICLES," DIRECTED BY MARY ZIMMERMAN.
PHOTO BY RICHARD TERMINE.

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Michael Kahn, Artistic Director, The Shakespeare Theatre

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Today, The Shakespeare Theatre has been called "the nation's foremost Shakespeare company" by *The Wall Street Journal* and "the best classical theatre in the country, bar none" by the *Christian Science Monitor.* Its subscriber base has grown from 3,900 to just under 17,000, and its budget has increased from $2.3 million to $12 million.

With five plays a season on its mainstage and one free play each summer in Rock Creek Park, the Theatre draws an audience of 165,000 each season. Its thought-provoking, eminently accessible productions attract not only Washingtonians but also visitors from across the United States and around the world.

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> "Artistic Director Michael Kahn has molded The Shakespeare Theatre into the closest thing this country has to Britain's Royal Shakespeare Company."
>
> *The Baltimore Sun*

Productions of lesser-known works by Shakespeare and other classic playwrights also have garnered praise. When the Theatre produced Shakespeare's seldom-performed history play "King John" in 1999, *The Washington Post* called the production "some of [Kahn's] most stunning work." In 2004, the Theatre invited Mary Zimmerman to direct a production of Shakespeare's much-neglected "Pericles," which *The Washington Post* praised as "an evening of bewitching ingenuity and bountiful surprise."

Kahn believes part of the Theatre's mission is to produce classic works unknown to American audiences. He directed the American professional première of Ben Jonson's "The Silent Woman"; German dramatist Friedrich Schiller's "Don Carlos"; and the world première of a new translation/adaptation of Alfred de Musset's masterpiece, "Lorenzaccio."

In 1991, the Theatre realized Kahn's dream of free Shakespeare in the park, beginning the annual Shakespeare Theatre Free For All at Carter Barron Amphitheatre in Rock Creek Park. Each summer, the Free For All attracts more than 30,000 people for two weeks of Shakespeare under the stars.

> "Kahn calls up the combination of stylization and raw force that has brought his productions of the classics to towering life."
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> *The Washington Post*

Because of its national and international renown, the Theatre regularly attracts such distinguished guest artists as Jane Alexander, Elizabeth Ashley, Keith Baxter, Avery Brooks, Dixie Carter, Kathleen Chalfant, Keir Dullea, Jonathan Hadary, Harry Hamlin, Hal Holbrook, Tom Hulce, Stacy Keach, Sabrina Le Beauf, Jean LeClerc, Judith Light, Victor Love, Kelly McGillis, Jean Stapleton, Patrick Stewart, Richard Thomas, Joan van Ark, Paul Winfield, Geraint Wyn Davies, and Karen Ziemba.

New audiences have been introduced to the Theatre's work through its performances at major festivals. As part of the 2004 "Tennessee Williams Explored" festival at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Theatre presented "Five by Tenn," an evening of newly discovered one-acts by Tennessee Williams. In 2003, the Theatre traveled to Greece's Athens Festival to present "The Oedipus Plays," Kahn's single-evening adaptation of Sophocles' Theban trilogy. The Athens press hailed the production, featuring Avery Brooks, Earle Hyman, and Cynthia Martells, as "inventive and rejuvenating."

THE FAIRY KINGDOM IN THE SHAKESPEARE THEATRE'S 2003 PRODUCTION OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S "A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM," DIRECTED BY MARK LAMOS. PHOTO BY RICHARD TERMINE.
NANCY ROBINETTE AS MISTRESS OTTER, AMANDA WHITING AS MISTRESS DOL MAVIS, NIKKI E. WALKER AS MADAME CENTAUR, GREGG ALMQUIST AS SIR JOHN DAW, FLOYD KING AS SIR AMOROUS LA FOOLE AND (SEATED) RICHARD ROBICHAUX AS EPICOENE AND NAOMI JACOBSON AS MADAME HAUGHTY IN THE SHAKESPEARE THEATRE'S 2003 PRODUCTION OF "THE SILENT WOMAN" BY BEN JONSON, DIRECTED BY MICHAEL KAHN. PHOTO BY RICHARD TERMINE.

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HARMAN CENTER FOR THE ARTS

Harman Center for the Arts

Ever looking forward, the Theatre and its board have embarked on a plan that will define the Theatre's future: the creation of the Harman Center for the Arts and the building of a second theatre, the new Sidney Harman Hall. Two theatres will enable The Shakespeare Theatre to present a larger number and broader range of classical works while creating opportunities for outstanding performing artists from around the world to perform in Washington. Located at the epicenter of Washington's downtown arts and entertainment district, the Harman Center is named for Dr. Sidney Harman, Trustee of The Shakespeare Theatre and Executive Chairman of Harman International. The Harman Center is scheduled to open in 2007.

Shakespeare in the Community

The Shakespeare Theatre's influence in Washington extends far beyond the stage and into the community. Led by Kahn, Managing Director Nicholas T. Goldsborough, the Board of Trustees and its chairman, Landon Butler, the Theatre has championed a comprehensive group of education programs. These programs enhance appreciation and understanding of classic theatre in learners of all ages.

As the Richard Rodgers Director of the Drama Division of The Juilliard School, Kahn has always understood the importance of actor training. Spurred by a special need for trained classical actors, the Theatre formed the Academy for Classical Acting (ACA) in conjunction with George Washington University. The ACA offers a one-year Master of Fine Arts program for professional actors focused on the specific craft of acting Shakespeare and other classics.

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ALEAH WINDHAM AS YOUNG ISMENE, AVERY BROOKS AS OEDIPUS AND MERCEDEZ TASHARMBA MITCHELL AS YOUNG ANTIGONE IN THE SHAKESPEARE THEATRE'S 2001 PRODUCTION OF SOPHOCLES' "THE OEDIPUS PLAYS," TRANSLATED BY NICHOLAS RUDALL AND DIRECTED BY MICHAEL KAHN. PHOTO BY CAROL ROSEGG.

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the three-hour drive, then drive back at night."

Gabbana: "Because I don't like to stay in hotels."

Dolce: "So we went back and forth. In this little car. We were so young."

Gabbana: "You don't think then. You are very naïve, and everything is spontaneous."

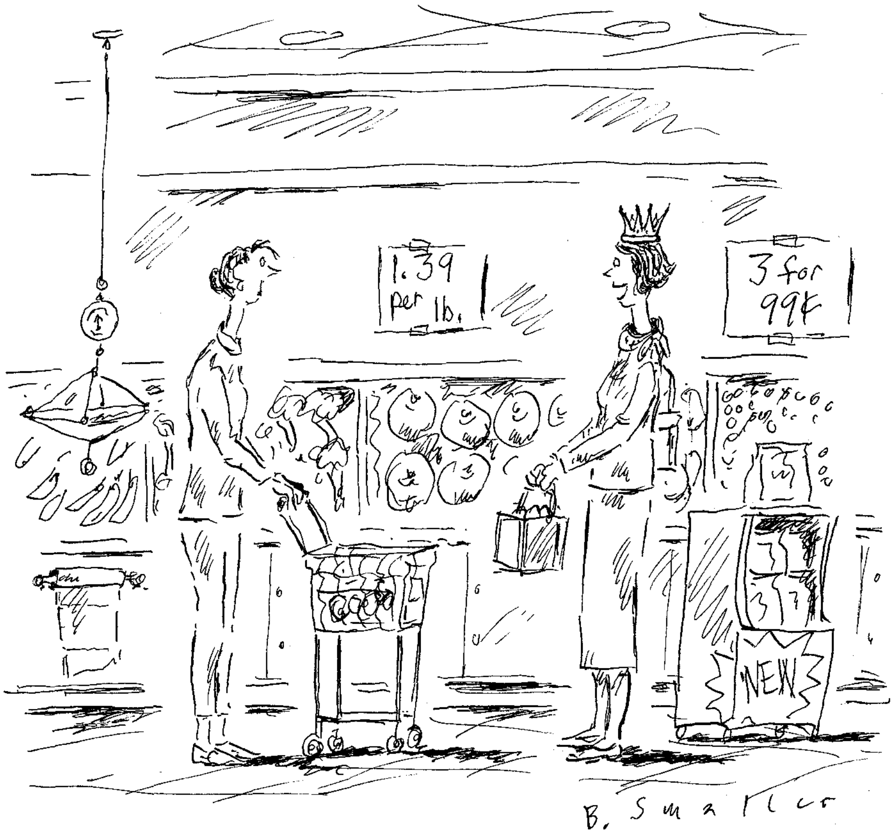
That collection, called "Real Women," débuted in March, 1986. There were stretchy black jersey dresses with flowing toile sleeves and shawls. The clothes were weirdly funereal and sexy at the same time. The press liked the line, but it didn't sell. Gabbana wrote a letter to the fabric supplier, cancelling their order for the next collection, and, feeling defeated, the couple went to stay with Dolce's family in Sicily for the Christmas holiday. There, Saverio Dolce offered them the money to pay for that collection. It was too late, Gabbana told him, because they had already cancelled the fabric order. But the letter to the supplier had been lost in the mail, and the fabric was waiting for them when they returned to Milan.

On that same trip to Sicily, Dolce had seen a billboard in Palermo that showed a black-and-white photograph of a woman in a shawl, with her head down, in a sorrowful attitude. He couldn't get the image out of his mind. He found out that the photographer's name was Ferdinando Scianna, an Italian photojournalist known for his neorealist depictions of Sicily. Dolce asked him if he would photograph their clothes. Scianna refused, saying that he wasn't a fashion photographer. But because he was Sicilian the designers eventually persuaded him to come to Sicily with the model Marpessa, a quiet, introverted beauty, who, wearing no makeup, posed among fishermen and fruit sellers and old ladies, in grittily realistic surroundings that recalled the aftermath of an earthquake. Only later did the designers discover that Scianna had not, in fact, shot the photograph that Dolce had seen in Palermo—a photographer named Letizia Battaglia had taken it. Like so many of the best things about Dolce & Gabbana, the campaign was an accident.

Scianna's early advertising images were at least as important in introducing Dolce & Gabbana to the public as the clothes themselves. One could argue that Dolce & Gabbana established itself with the public mainly through advertising, rather than relying on the approval of the fashion press. However, while Scianna's photographs gave the brand an identity that Italians could relate to, it was too Mediterranean to capture a wide audience outside Italy. Seeking to broaden their appeal without losing touch with their Italian roots, the designers began appropriating imagery from neorealist Italian cinema. Scenes from classic films by Rossellini, Fellini, De Sica, Antonioni, Pasolini, and Visconti, as well as from movies featuring Totò, an Italian comedian, were interpreted by the most prominent commercial photographers and models of the nineties. These images allowed customers to feel that they were buying costumes for a "Dolce Vita" fantasy of their own. The idea wasn't particularly subtle, but it was effective.

Without Dolce's tailoring abilities, and his sense of propriety, bred in the provinces, the company wouldn't have had a chance. But, without Gabbana's urban freedom from those same restraints of taste and tailoring, the company could not have become the phenomenon that it is today. By the end of the nineteen-eighties, the designers' good Catholic girl was showing more and more of her underwear, and by the early nineteen-nineties that underwear was leopard print, which became a Dolce & Gabbana trademark. Leopard print allowed the designers to combine the naughtiness of the boudoir with the baroque formality of the Sicilian aristocracy. But, with Dolce pushing Gabbana toward elegance, the line also began to develop a kind of ecclesiastical finery; these were clothes for women who wanted to feel like a papal nuncio. The men's line began in 1990, and represented a return to the company's more conservative roots; Dolce has always been more in control of the men's clothes. On the other hand, in a younger line, D&G, for men and women, which débuted in 1994, the Gabbanian impulse toward excess was given free rein.

With the changing nature of the designers' collaboration, the ideal Dolce & Gabbana woman evolved from Anna Magnani in Rossellini's "Roma, Città Aperta" (a modest but powerful mother



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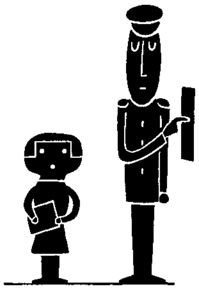
figure, in dark, layered clothes, with lots of skirts and sweaters, and somewhat unbuttoned blouses), to Sophia Loren performing a striptease for Marcello Mastroianni in De Sica's "Ieri, Oggi, Domani" (bras, corsets, and other undergarments from the rafters of Saverio Dolce's shop have been reimagined and transformed into outer garments), to Madonna, who wore a Dolce & Gabbana beaded corset at the première of "In Bed with Madonna," in 1991. Madonna translated Dolce & Gabbana for the masses. The designers created more than fifteen hundred costumes for Madonna's Girlie Show Tour, in 1993, and, more recently, designed the white cowgirl outfit for her "Music" video. Nowadays, the ideal woman is Monica Bellucci, a *bellissima* Italian actress who always seems to be weeping in her films, and who is the subject of the director Giuseppe Tornatore's short film for the company's fragrance, Sicily. (The ideal Dolce & Gabbana man never strays far from the soccer field.)



Almost two thousand people work at Dolce & Gabbana. The business is still entirely owned by the two designers. In 2002, Gabriella Forte, the former head of Calvin Klein, was brought in to oversee the North American market, which is just a sixth the size of the company's European sales. (She resigned last week for personal reasons.) In recent years, both Moët Hennessy-Louis Vuitton and the Gucci Group have offered to buy Dolce & Gabbana. "What, do we need more *mahney*?" says Gabbana, apropos of those offers, rubbing his fingertips together. Apparently, they do not. In addition to their apartments and offices in Milan, the designers have houses in Monte Carlo and Stromboli, and they recently bought L'Olivetta, a villa in Portofino which Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi had reportedly tried to purchase.

But success has come at a price—Dolce & Gabbana is no longer Dolce and Gabbana. The relationship on which the business was based ended two years ago, although the designers have publicly acknowledged the breakup only recently. They continue to own their homes together, but they now have different boyfriends; the two couples often travel together. They live in separate apartments in the same building in Milan, across the street from where they work.

Because so much of the unique appeal of Dolce & Gabbana rests on the unlikely union of the two designers' personalities, one has to wonder whether their business can survive the breakup.

Gabbana: "At first, I just wanted to leave. Just leave. But let's face it—I am not stupid. So I stayed. Little by little, we become friends again, and learn to have a relationship again, though obviously not like before."

Dolce: "We know each other very well. This is real love, when you get to know the person behind the person."

Gabbana: "We were together for nineteen years, night and day—it's like forty-five years, for most people."

"Look at this boy," Gabbana was saying now to Dolce, studying the head shot of the next model to be called up for a fitting. "Look at his face." With his fingers, Gabbana drew a circle in the air around the face. "He is a beautiful boy, no?"

Dolce shrugged and said, "*Sì*, beautiful." He walked back to the fitting area, to await the boy's arrival.

It was past five by now. Only a few models remained to be fitted, but the process had dragged on longer than expected, and the designers had work left to do on the women's "pre-collection"—the line they make for the buyers, before the runway show at the end of February. And there were also fittings to be completed for the D&G men's show, which would be staged two days after the Dolce & Gabbana show. One could sense the burden of all the looks still to process, stacked up like incoming aircraft waiting to land.

Gabbana: "When we started, we were a two-million-lira company. Now we are—"

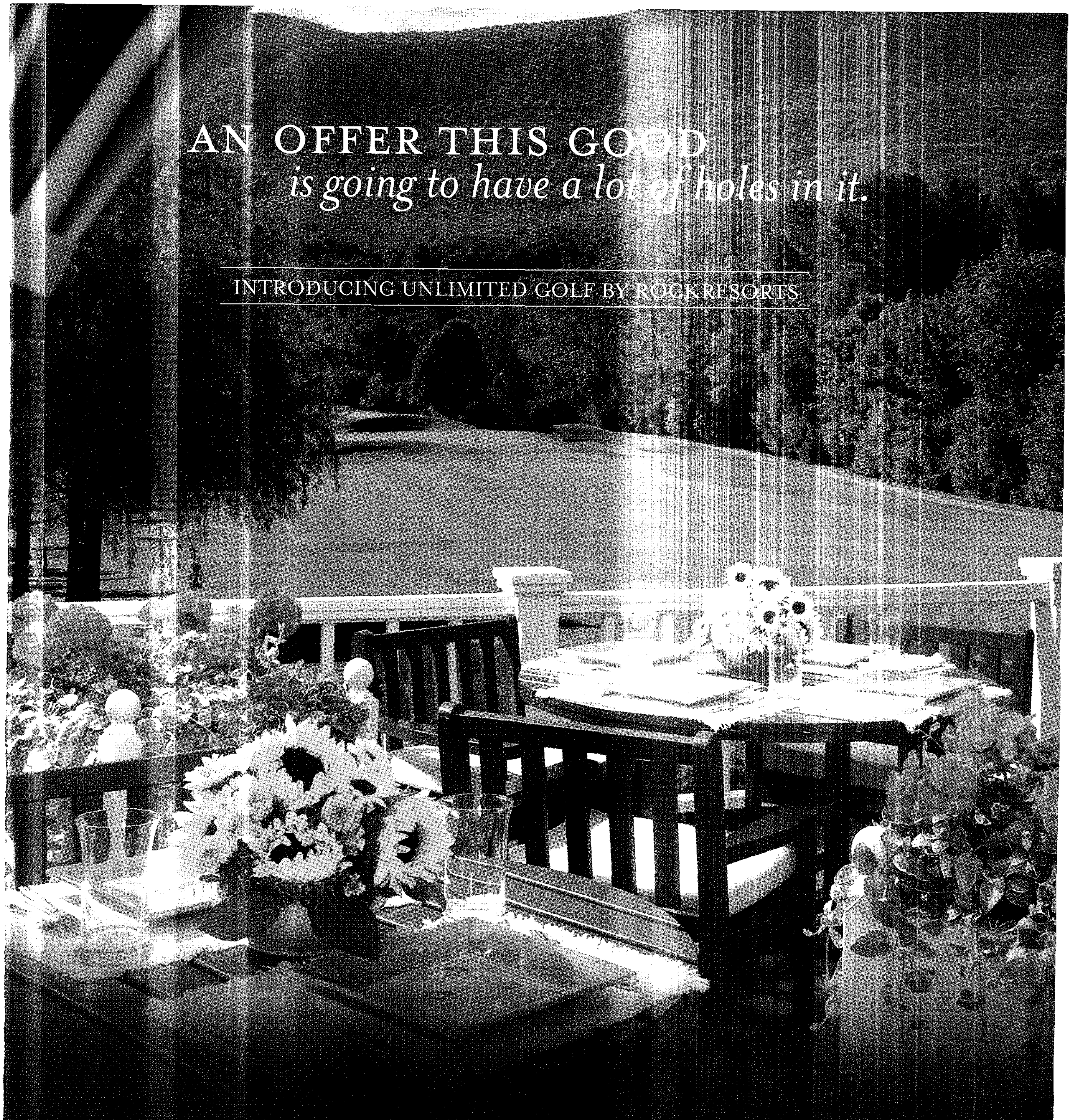
Dolce: "Almost a one-billion-euro company."

Gabbana: "Wholesale. We didn't have much money, so we had to do everything in stages."

Dolce: "One thing at a time."

Gabbana: "Now we have to do everything at once. Because that is what the customer wants."

Gabbana's cell phone rang, and he walked to the other end of the big room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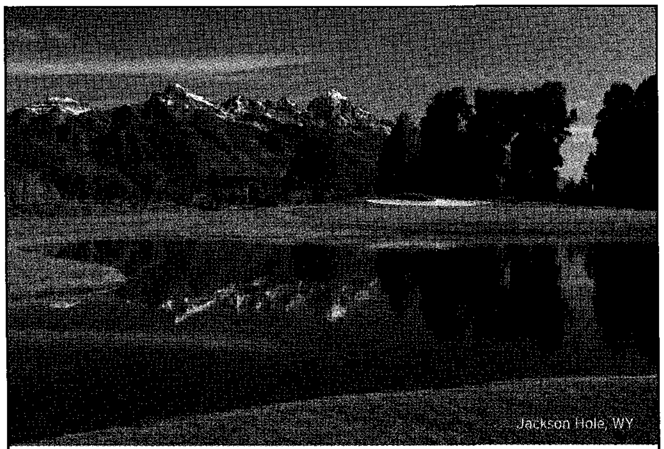

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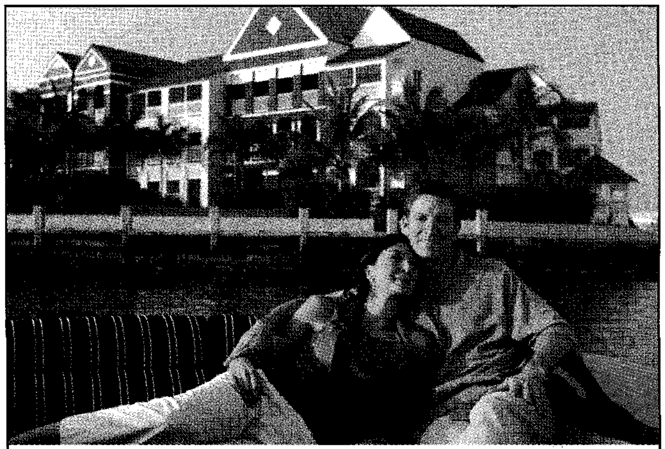

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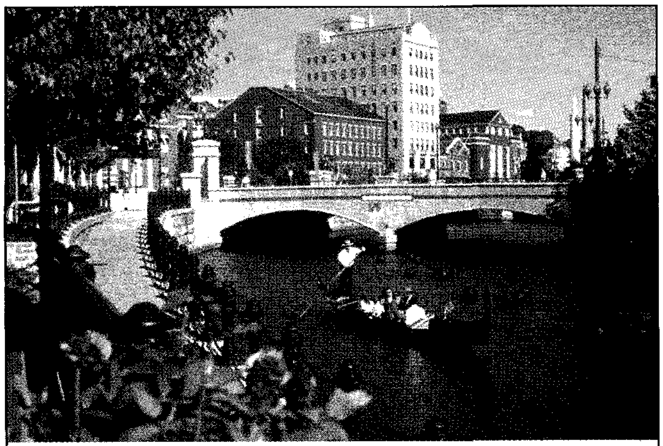

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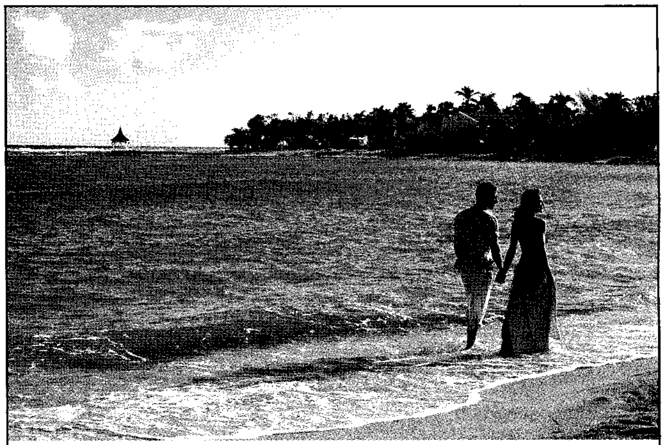

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to talk privately. He had recently finished taping ten new episodes of a dating reality show called "La Sottile Linea Rosa," or "The Thin Pink Line," an Italian Fox variation of an English series called "Straight Dates for Gay Mates." In the show, Gabbana plays the fairy godfather who drops in from time to time with fashion advice. ("With a body like that, a black sheath. It looks good on me, just imagine how it will look on her.") He can be seen holding a magic wand, sitting in front of dozens of burning candles of different lengths, with leopard-print wallpaper in the background.

Dolce didn't want to participate in the show, and the venture, coming at a time when they were separating, seemed to signal a break in their creative interests as well, but Gabbana did it anyway. Gabbana, for his part, says that he is interested in exploring other acting opportunities.

Gabbana returned as the beautiful boy, an American, was shown into the room. The model smiled, said "How's it going?" to Dolce, and immediately removed his trousers. An assistant handed him some Dolce & Gabbana underwear to put over his briefs, and then he slipped on a chocolate-and-cream-colored tracksuit.

The tracksuit was part of a relatively new addition to the Dolce & Gabbana line: luxury clothes for the gym. Several years ago, Dolce started going to a gym in the evenings, after work. He had never been sporty, like Gabbana, who told me, "I do track and field, including pole-vaulting, in high school. Also basket, swim, and volley." The world of working out was new to Dolce, and represented a more solitary existence, but he was impressed by how well dressed the men in the gym were—much better dressed than the women, who looked "awful," he thought.

But fitting the tracksuit seemed to perplex Dolce. He kept fussing with the waist, adjusting exactly where the pants fell on the model's "Adonis belt"—the muscles that curl down on either side of the abdominals. He tried hemming the pants, but that didn't seem to satisfy him, either. He squatted at the model's feet, holding the hem between his fingers, his temples twitching with concentration.

When I left, they were still at it. Outside, night had fallen, but the smog had lifted, and the air had a sugary scent of snow. ♦

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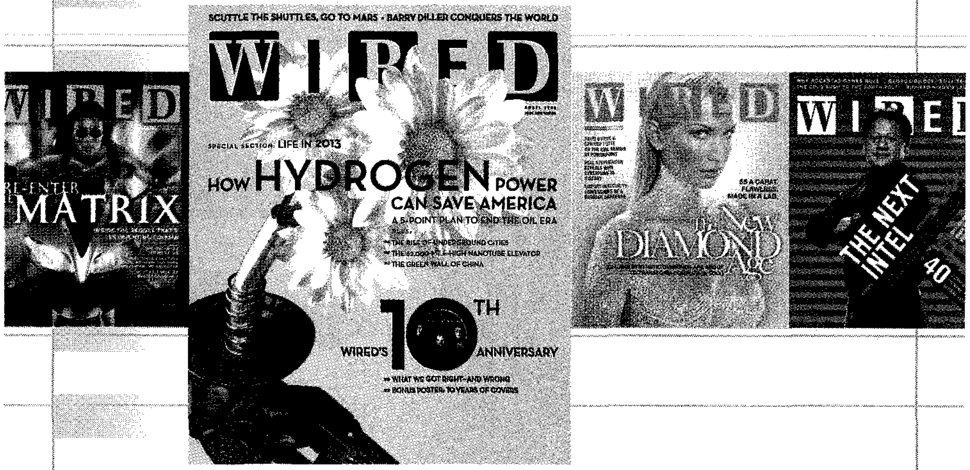
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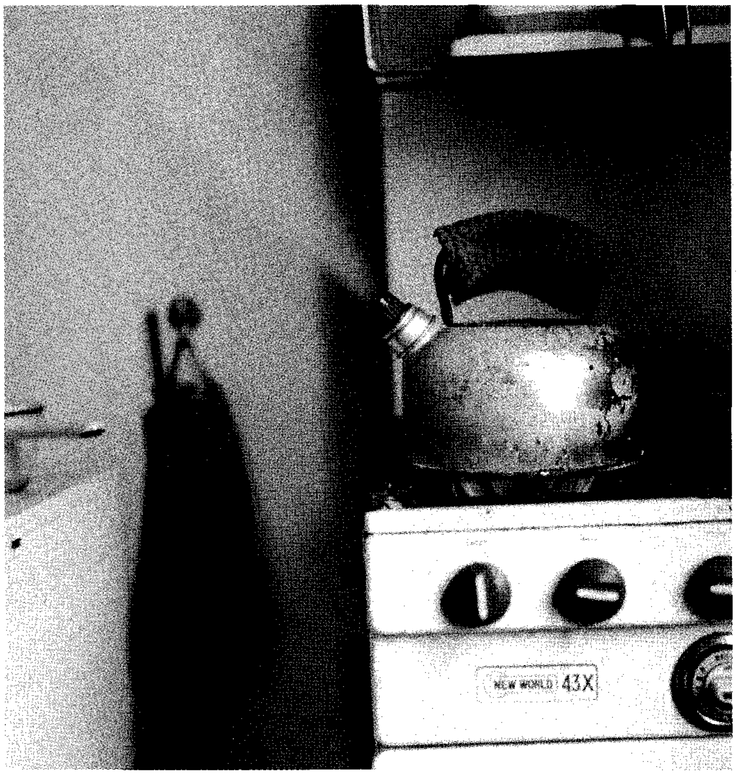
BY ANNE ENRIGHT



JULIAN GERMAIN, "FOR EVERY MINUTE . . ." (2005)/STEIDLMACK

Della thought again about the stream, which was black and broad, and about the naked boys who played on its sloping banks, all very white. One of them reached toward the water with a stick, but the stick did not touch the water. She could see him leaning sideways off the steep bank. There was a scrubby tree leaning in from the other bank, and the leaves were small and grayish against the black water.

Della had no idea where the river was, or who the boy was, or whether he was about to fall into the water. She did not know if this was something that she had seen once, or whether she would see it sometime in the future. It was a dream, or something off the telly. She thought that it had something to do with the River Blackwater, but it was probably not even Irish. In Ireland, boys didn't swim in the nip.

Della knew there was nothing important in the river, a clump of twigs and leaves, or an oddly shaped stick. The boy was reaching out just for the pleasure of it—to see if he could.

She thought it might be in Russia, the river was so black, and the trees were birch trees. Or maybe the boys' bodies just reminded her of birch trees, which always looked so fresh and hopeful. But the boys looked sad, too, she thought, like boys in a picture that was taken before a great war.

The man next door was going blind, but he didn't seem to notice it. Della felt obliged to point it out to him, even though it was none of her business and she didn't really know what to say. They had lived side by side for more than fifty years, but they never got on much. Della had liked his wife, but she was dead a long time now, and he had never been chatty. Besides, his manner with children had stung Della when she was rearing her own. Her five and his two, all gone.

At least hers came back now and again—his didn't darken the door—but they were scattered, and Della, left to herself for long stretches of time, was prone to forgetfulness and thoughts about birch trees and naked boys she had never known. Sometimes, from next door came a scratching or tapping, which made her think, What could he be up to in there? Other times, so much silence that she wrote it down: "16th October—no noise," trying to keep track of things, in case the man died. Despite the fact that she couldn't remember what year it was.

She pushed the pieces of paper behind the mantelpiece clock. The noises happened behind this wall, in his kitchen, which was the mirror to hers. Domestic scrapings, and the occasional bump or clatter. You might think, as she sometimes did, that he was doing something odd in there, but who would have guessed the real oddness of it—that he could not see what he was doing at all.

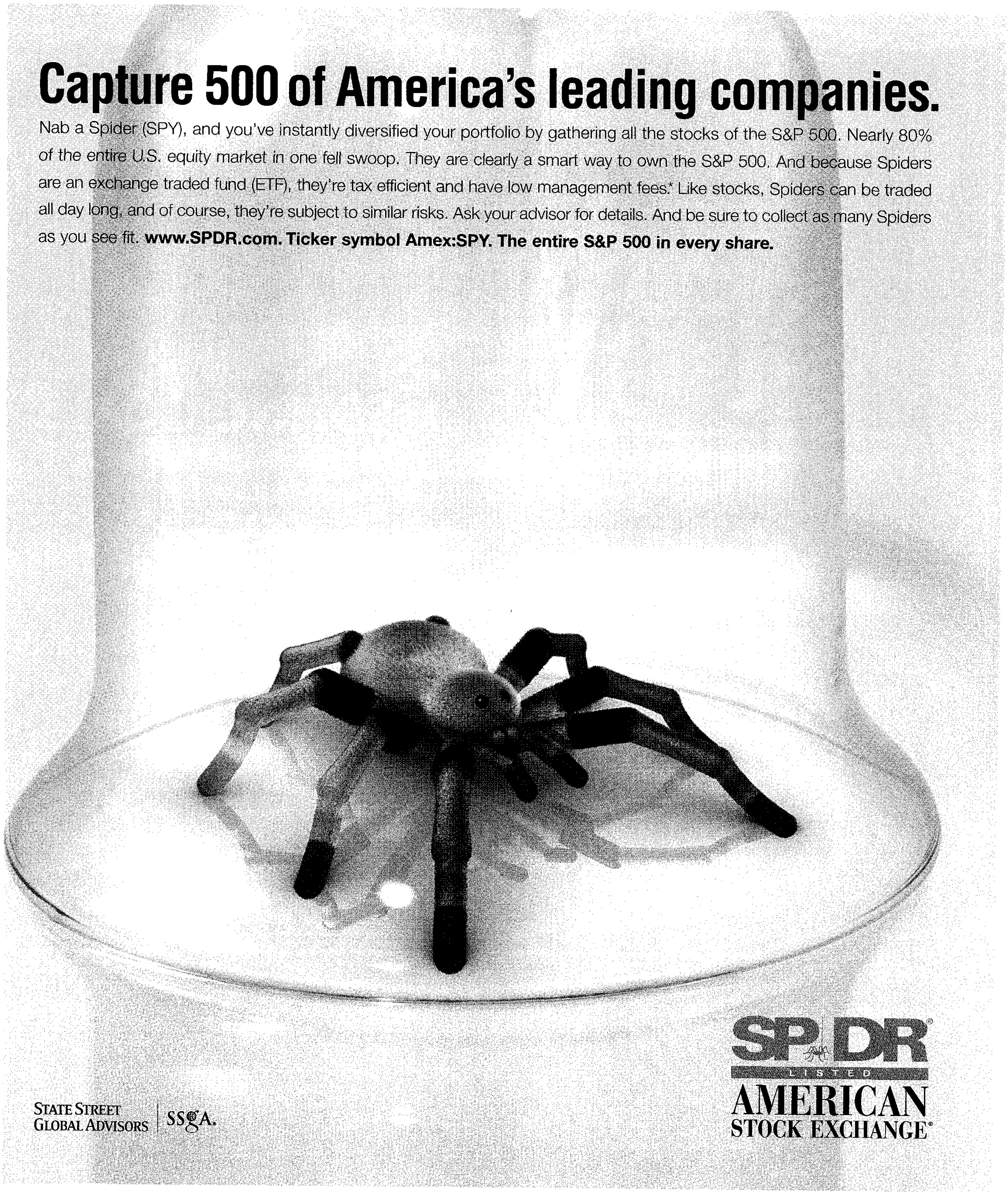
It took her months to realize it. She met him outside the local newsagent's—it might have been a day in February—and he neglected to salute her. And this put her in mind of the last time he had passed, without a nod or a sign. So either he was fighting with her or there was something else astray. Still, he had always been such an irritating person that the weather turned to spring before her conscience finally got to her and she said, "Hello, Tom," in a voice so loud it might have sounded sarcastic.

He startled and looked around.

"Della?" he said, and she would have thought then that the eyes were going, if it weren't for the daily paper tucked under his arm. Also, she knew by the way he said her name that he was more intimate with her than she liked, on the other side of their brick wall.

Then, one day in April, she saw the newspapers in a clump for the bin men, and a curious sense about them woke her up in the middle of the night with the fact that they had not been opened, let alone read, and the man next door, whether he knew it or not, was blind.

There was nothing worse than knowing this. If it was just his mind that was going, then at least he would forget, from



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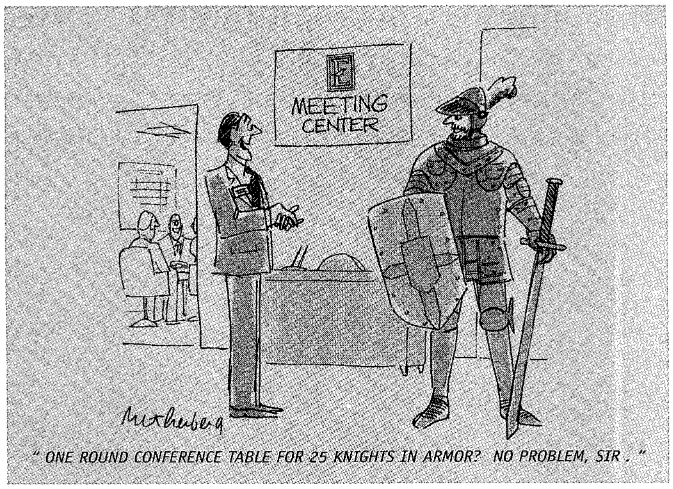

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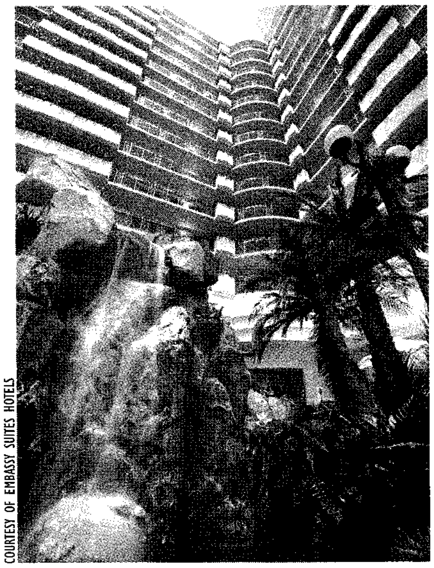
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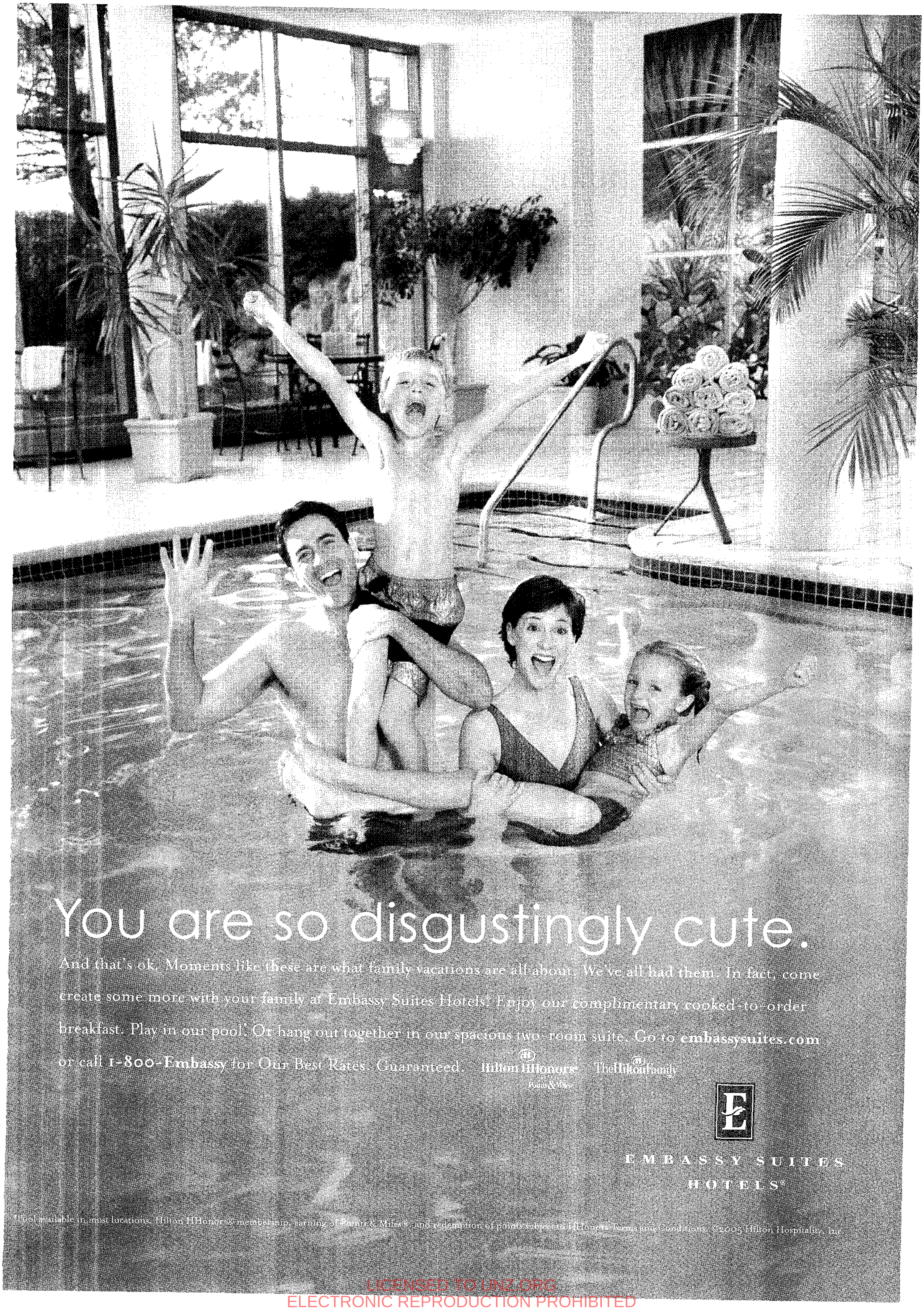
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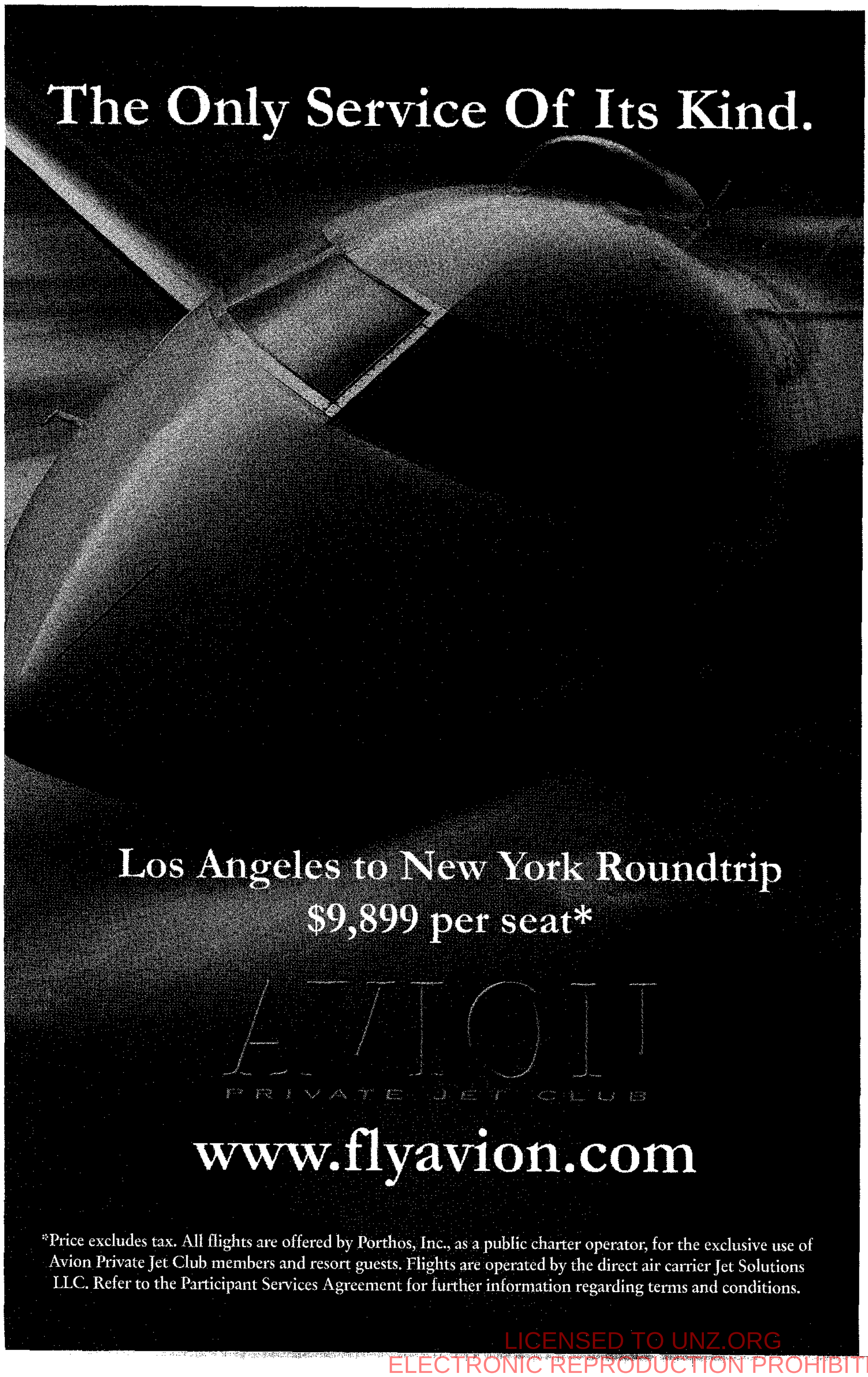
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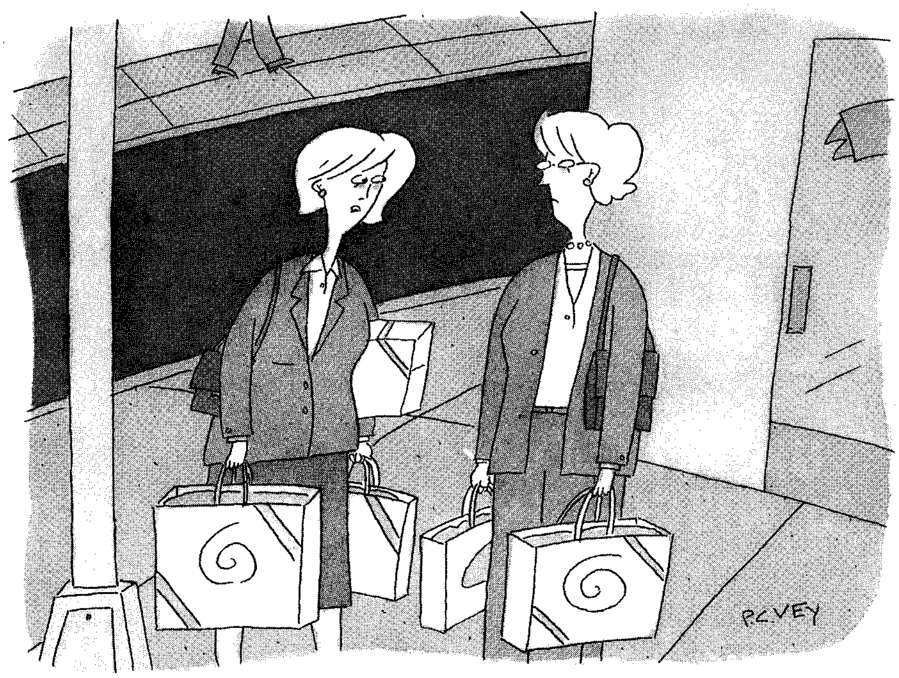
one minute to the next, how miserable he was. But the noises behind the wall were not the vague scrabblings of old age. He was looking for something. He was getting it wrong, over and over again. She thought of him in there, in the gathering filth, and she hadn't even a phone number to ring. And even if she had—if she looked one of the children up in the book—what would she say? They would be in their fifties by now, Colm and Maureen, with families of their own. They would be older than her doctor, older than most people. Imagine asking them to remember their own father—the shame of it. Imagine being turned down.

She looked in the book anyway and found the son's name, Colm Delaney. Della had a vision of him at the age of five—such a charmer, and bold as brass. Though she had felt, even then, that the brass would win out in the end and the charm sour into his father's talent for passing remarks. She did not lift the phone.



"Most of my consumerism is self-taught."

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He was a most provoking man, Mr. Blink, Mr. Blunderbuss, the soft white stick that lived next door. One of the first things he said to her—she was out walking her new baby, they couldn't have been three weeks in the place. It was the summer of 1950, and there she was with her beautiful first son, pushing him in front of her for all to admire, and he looked into the pram and said, "He's small for an Aberdeen Angus." From which she was to take all sorts of implications. Poor Della, the innocent young wife, with a nine-pound baby coming out of her—the fright of it at the time and the whole world turning inside out. *He's small for an Aberdeen Angus.* A tone he had that walked into your head and made itself right at home. Laughing at the wreck of her private parts, somehow, or at the size of her husband's—her husband was off working in Scotland at the time—laughing at her foolish pride in the baby and, worse than all this, obliging her to laugh, too.

She would have forgotten it, if it weren't so much the nature of the man.

"You're very dressed up," he might say, meeting her in the kitchen over a cup of tea with his wife. Like she was getting above herself. Or maybe his wife was letting herself go. Whatever he meant, he managed to make everyone unhappy, in a radius.

"Oh, you'd know all about that," he'd say, over something innocuous like buying a pork chop.

"About what? *What?*" Sometimes she wanted to remind him that he did not actually know her. That anyone could have bought the house next door. Anyone at all could be playing with their baby in the little front garden as he walked by and said, "How's the brat?" over the wall.

It was midsummer by now, and Della was awake at four and asleep again at three in the afternoon, and it was very aggravating to be so out of step with the world, snoring through the Lotto results and waking with the worst kind of film spilling, unheeded, into the room. She would switch the telly off, and in the afterimage came the picture of the boys playing on the riverbank. She would try to hold that, and fix the place in her mind. The white forks of their legs; the ease and grace of them as they stood and watched the boy with a stick leaning out over the water. The flatness of the river below.

Della was expecting to die any moment. But it didn't seem to be happening, somehow—river or no river. Still, this was another reason that she put off doing something about the man next door, feeling, in a childish sort of way, that no one would expect her to help him if she was dead: no one would blame her if she was slumped in a chair with her mouth open catching flies while the telly begged for someone to turn it off, night after night. But she didn't die. She didn't even feel dizzy when she stood up out of her chair. All that came to her was the alien smell and the drifting nights of old age, while darkness gathered next door and the scratching and tapping went on. Getting under the skin of his own house: the world's most irritating man.

"Where are you off to?" he'd said to her once. "In your good shoes."

Maybe, she thought all these decades later, he had been talking about sex. And this was what got to her. The nerve of him—thinking she might be interested, horrible person that he was, the kind of man who'd be sarcastic to a dog. But she had left herself open to it: by being pregnant, maybe, by pushing prams, by whatever passed between herself and her husband in the dark. So it was just as much as she deserved (her whimpering, maybe, coming through the wall)—he could say what he liked about her shoes, or her pork chops, or the vegetables she bought from the vegetable man. It was enough to drive you demented. She began to feel thought about, and watched. She did not like passing his windows anymore.

She wouldn't have kept up the connection except that they were neighbors and

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AFTER RODIN'S "THE CLOUDS"

Two beautiful women in the sky kissing,
their arms and legs wrapped around each other,
one has wings, is an angel. Her lover's left hand
is deep in her feathers. Her lover's right hand
reaches deep inside her. Their tongues
are pink, gentle, rough, or hard.
The miracle is that a cloud can kiss,
that if one cloud has wings and is wrapped
around the other, the other is helpless.
Now they are rolling over each other.
I wish I could carve my name, "Stanley,"
on the white marble bluff. I am in Cardiff.
I sleep at the Angel Hotel.

—*Stanley Moss*

she felt sorry for his wife, Noreen, who was a terrific person, especially when Della was off in the maternity ward. Noreen fed the abandoned children and doted on the new babies, each of them as they came home—this woman, who was sneered at day and night by a husband who only ever gave her two.

Though he was mad about her in his way. Couldn't move without her, somehow. And there was a whole year he sat in their front room and nothing was said—about his job, or what was happening, or what was wrong with him, and why was he sitting in the dark. After which time his comments never seemed to hit home. They were getting a bit old for all that anyway: Della, bagged out by five pregnancies, looking in the mirror and seeing her mother looking back. Still, she had felt, in those years, uncommonly strong, with all her children growing around her. Until the day her little daughter, Margaret, came in crying because Mr. Delaney said that her chest was getting fat. Such a peculiar and wrong thing for a man to say, and the whole street going, "Isn't he a ticket, ha-ha-ha." She'd thought it was wrong at the time and she thought so now and, though her own husband said she was silly, hysterical, call it what you like, Della, burning with shame and sorrow for her daughter's poor breasts, did not address a word to Tom Delaney, or laugh at his jokes, or stop in the street, from that day out. She did not fight him, she just failed to respond, and his wife she spoke to less and less and then not at all. And this was a great loss to her: his wife, Noreen, who was always such a terrific person—it cut a small notch out of her. By the time she died, Noreen had no friends left, of course, and that, too, may have been part of his plan—the spoiler. Della went to the poor woman's funeral and wondered if things could have been otherwise and realized that they could not.

He must be covered in bruises, she thought one day, to the sound of a dish hitting his kitchen floor: a crash followed by three more, so regular they may have been deliberate—and how was he going to clear that up? Coming down in the morning with his feet bare. She picked her feet up in sympathy, quickly. One. Two.

It was unbearable. Della went upstairs and cleaned the mirror of the bathroom cabinet, and looked at the picture of herself in there: an old woman she didn't know. Nothing to do with the young woman pushing a pram, or the middle-aged woman watching, as he walked behind his wife's coffin, the face of Tom Delaney made frank and obscene by grief. It was indecent, she thought at the time, to go to a funeral with no forgiveness in your heart. There was no luck to it.

Was that what had gone wrong? Della tried to see herself in the bathroom mirror, but she saw, instead, Any Old Woman: someone whose kindness did not matter.

She took the soap dish and banged on the pipe that led down from the cistern to the back of the toilet: a thin, un-satisfying sound, of plastic against plastic. She cast about, found the Olbas Oil in its little thick bottle, and reached for the ceramic of the cistern itself. Then she tapped three times.

It came that evening—mortifying: One, Two, Three. He was knocking on the spot directly behind the mantelpiece clock. Della picked up the poker and, with a dangerous surge in her thin old heart, tapped back, twice. The silence that followed reminded her of leaning in for a kiss, or deciding to lean in, and when the returning knock came she was off at the sink, making a cup of tea. Enough was enough. She would have to buy a packet of biscuits tomorrow and, pretending that nothing had ever happened, ring the bell next door.

The boys playing by the river did not have private parts, she realized, when she woke at dawn, and found herself still in the old chair downstairs. They were blurred at the crotch, as angels might be blurred. It was not that their penises did not exist, it was just that she could not picture them—the one that belonged to the boy with a stick, for example, hanging down as he leaned out over the water, straight as a plumb line. She could think of it, but she could not see it, even though she knew it was there.

The lump of twigs and leaves, on the other hand, became clearer, cut the water more sharply; it pulled through the flow like an opening zip. Della could not imagine it as anything else: a dead dog, for example, or a living water rat, or the periscope of some unlikely submarine. The twigs and leaves remained just what they were. For which she would always be grateful.

Because there was something about the scene that she had not noticed before, a different quality. If she thought very hard about the blackness of the river, and the whiteness of the boys (were there four boys or five?), if she let them be—let the boy with the stick reach for the water, let the watching boys shift from one foot to the other, and the water flow on—if she did not try too hard, she could sense it, there in the picture. Music. Very beautiful. It was hard to say what kind.

"Hello, Tom," she said at the door.

"Della?" he said. And she was reminded of his tone outside the newsagent's, saying her name with a voice that, if you shut your eyes, was the voice of true love.

"I have some biscuits," she said, obliging him to let her in. And when he did—the devastation of the place.

"Ah, Tom," she said. "Would you not think of the Meals on Wheels?"

"I did, sure," he said. "Until they took my radio."

"They did not."

"They were cute enough. They left me this one. Except it's full of holes."

And he made his way unerringly to the radio on the table, which was an ordinary radio with ordinary holes in it, for the sound to come through. He was starting to imagine things. Della's own sight wasn't the best—she had to admit it—but at least she knew what she could and could not see. It was typical of Tom Delaney that he wouldn't go blind just because his eyesight deserted him. It was typical of him not to let on. Della was so annoyed with him she forgot herself, and spoke as if they had been close, all these years.

"I'm too old to be cleaning up after you," she said.

Though there was a solace to it, too, getting a brush and shoving the whole stinking lot out the back door. Much easier, she thought, than cleaning up your own place. Lord Lucan sitting behind her at the table, patting the holes in his radio or reaching his soft fingertips to the plate of biscuits. You couldn't even begin to tackle the sink. She would have to get Margaret on to it—at least get her to ring the social services. Poor Margaret, with three teen-age children and no husband in Glasnevin, and the breasts that Tom Delaney had mocked in 1964 just a nuisance now, when she ran for the bus. And it seemed so absurd to Della—the thirty years that these things mattered, out of the eighty years that made up a life, eighty or more—that she found herself laughing out loud.

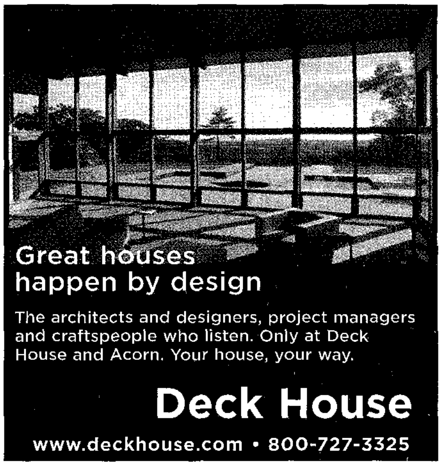
"What's the joke?" he said.

"Nothing," she said.

"Don't let me stop you," he said.

"I won't, so," she said.

And he turned his face to her; gleeful, as if he could see her quite clearly—a woman in his kitchen who was far from being a virgin, a woman who would, no doubt, find him quite attractive, in the end. ♦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INTELLIGENT DESIGN

Can Rem Koolhaas kill the skyscraper?

BY DANIEL ZALEWSKI

Before he can build, the Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas likes to say, he must first seduce a client with his vision—a process that he describes as "foreplay." As with most things Koolhaas does, his strategy for eliciting desire is unorthodox. Architecture firms typically present computer renderings that seamlessly insert an imaginary new building into a familiar skyline: a tidy fantasy of the future. Koolhaas is messier. He prefers to show clients what he calls "thinking produced in its raw form."

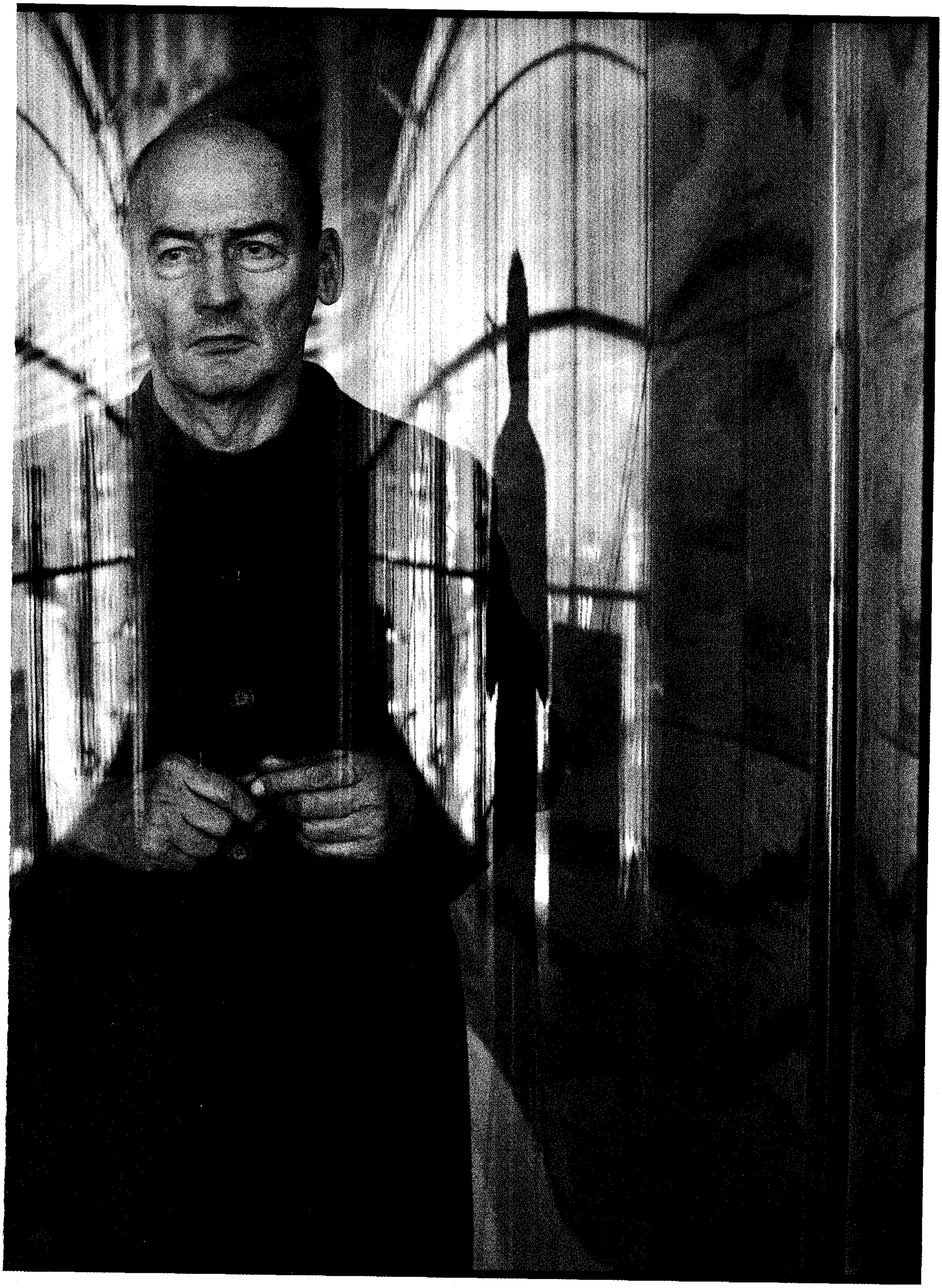
On a drizzly September afternoon in the Baroque heart of St. Petersburg, Koolhaas conferred with two young colleagues in a corridor outside the office of Mikhail Piotrovsky, the director of the State Hermitage Museum. Shortly, he would present his proposal for an "invisible" addition to the museum. At Koolhaas's request, one of his associates extracted a model from a container the size of a shoebox. It was a blunt geometric form, suggesting, in profile, the lid of a grand piano. It was also brazenly shoddy. Pieces of blue foam, orange posterboard, and Plexiglas had been glued together in the manner of a child's craft project. The model had been hastily assembled the previous night at the headquarters of Koolhaas's firm, the Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA), in Rotterdam. Hours before flying to Russia, Koolhaas had ordered radical simplifications to the design—"Often, my most important role is to undo things," he later explained—and there had not been time to make a more polished prototype.

Koolhaas, a sternly handsome man, with hazel eyes that are perpetually underscored by half-moons of fatigue, examined the ramshackle object without embarrassment. "This is intelligent," he said to his colleagues, putting on his reading glasses. Like many architects, he signals his profession with intimidatingly unusual eyewear. He currently favors a modular design, in which rectangular plastic lenses snap into chopstick-straight temples of various colors. Today's choice was reserved: tortoiseshell.

As far as Koolhaas was concerned, it didn't matter much what the model looked like; if the addition was actually built, its façade would be almost entirely hidden from view. He and his colleagues had devised a scheme that would tuck a sleek modern structure inside the nineteenth-century skin of the General Staff Building—a mazelike annex of the Hermitage where Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs once had its headquarters. The new structure would supplant two empty courtyards, some abandoned stairwells, and a series of unused offices. In their place would be a freestanding "core museum" that would offer expansive new galleries and provide clear pathways to parts of the 1827 building that were not easily accessible. These alterations would amplify the building's already considerable exhibition space and allow the Hermitage to showcase its collection more effectively. Yet a visitor to Palace Square, the checkerboard plaza at the center of the museum complex, would not be able to tell that the Hermitage had changed since the days of the tsars. "We are trying to reimagine the Hermitage *without* making a manifest intervention," Koolhaas told me. He speaks English in a rapid monotone, with lightly warped vowels; it's an ideal delivery system for oracular pronouncements.

Koolhaas, who is sixty, is a champion of the new who is bitterly disappointed by most new things. In fact, the Hermitage project was inspired by his contempt for the clichés of current archi-

Koolhaas is at once a builder and a wrecking ball. Photograph by Steve Pyke.



tecture—in part, as he had explained, "the nauseating contemporary impulse to impose spectacular glass additions on spaces that already have their own aura." Koolhaas is simultaneously a builder and a wrecking ball, and his remark was aimed at such celebrated museum expansions as I. M. Pei's glass pyramid outside the Louvre and Sir Norman Foster's vast glass-tiled canopy for the courtyard of the British Museum. (In lectures, Koolhaas has accused Foster of turning an icon of the Enlightenment into a kitschy homage to the Mall of America.) OMA's proposal for the General Staff Building was a Koolhaasian call for lavish restraint. It would require the Hermitage's directors to spend millions of dollars on an expansion without getting a shimmery showpiece in return. "St. Petersburg does *not* need a Guggenheim Bilbao," he said. He began unbuttoning his pin-striped Prada overcoat, which was cut unusually short, emphasizing his skyscraper frame—he is a slim six feet five.

Piotrovsky, a silver-haired man with aristocratic grace—his father, Boris, had also served as the Hermitage's director—opened his door and briskly welcomed Koolhaas inside his grimly luxurious office. Droopy silk curtains covered the windows, and the walls were lined with faded tapestries. The office was surprisingly chilly; draped over Piotrovsky's striped shirt was a black scarf, which he wears to protest the fact that the museum, which is mostly funded by the state, cannot afford proper heating. As he gestured for the architect to sit down at the Romanov version of a conference table—two other chairs were occupied by rickety towers of old books—he said that gossip was circulating in town that the Hermitage leadership favored Koolhaas's scheme. "It was recently reported in *Izvestia* that I was spotted reading one of your books on the railway," he said, chuckling.

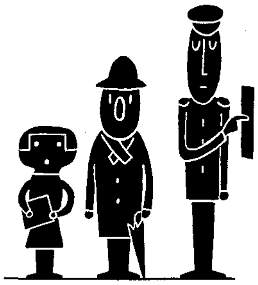
Koolhaas smiled and sat down beside Vladimir Matveyev, the museum's deputy director of exhibitions, an art historian with a basso profundo's voice and girth. "I want to begin a discussion with the Russian architecture world," Koolhaas said, adding that he was wary of being seen as a foreign interloper. He noted that he had visited the Soviet Union many times to see Constructivist and Stalinist buildings—"In 1971, I came down with my only case of pneumonia in this city," he said—and expressed his ardor for "sixties and seventies Soviet architecture" as well. On the drive from the airport to downtown St. Petersburg, Koolhaas had focussed on a bleak row of dilapidated concrete apartment towers and swooned over their "heartbreaking delicateness."

"Say something on those buildings' behalf before they're torn down," Piotrovsky said. "Nobody here defends that architecture."

The audaciously cantilevered design that OMA created for the new Seattle Public Library has confirmed Koolhaas's status as one of the reigning global "starchitects." He usually competes for work against the same small group of people, among them Frank Gehry, Zaha Hadid, Daniel Libeskind, and Renzo Piano. In this case, the Hermitage's board had already held a preliminary competition, in 2002, and had chosen a St. Petersburg firm named Studio 44. The central concept of the Russians' scheme, which would be formally presented to the board the next afternoon, was to cover the General Staff Building's five courtyards with a glass-tiled roof.

Although Piotrovsky was too diplomatic to say so, he apparently had concerns about Studio 44's approach—for one thing, keeping a huge glass-covered atrium warm during the Russian winter would be supremely expensive—and so Koolhaas had been retained by the Hermitage as a consultant. If OMA's design was preferred by the museum's board, then Studio 44 would quietly shelve its blueprints and devote its energies to Koolhaas's scheme.

Koolhaas directed Piotrovsky and Matveyev to examine his tiny model. The two men hunched over it awkwardly, betraying no surprise at its slapdash appearance. "The idea is to insert a device that can give you some grip on the maze," Koolhaas explained, gently removing the interlocking pieces of the model to show the interior spaces of the new six-story hub. Despite its flimsiness, the OMA model illustrated how museumgoers would be able to move directly from Palace Square into the new structure, then radiate into the old galleries. Koolhaas claimed that his proposal would require much less demolition than the Russians' plan. "The goal is to maintain current conditions as much as possible, and also inspire new ideas of how to display art," he said. "Museums are becoming more about gift shops than art. The Hermitage can be different." He noted that a gigantic new room on the ground floor—created by unifying the two courtyards—would permit the display of mammoth works. "I want to inspire new curatorial strategies," he said.



Piotrovsky was silent for a moment. Finally, he said, "I like it."

Even with Piotrovsky's blessing, OMA's takeover of the Hermitage expansion would be tricky to pull off—especially if Studio 44's demotion from sole designer to collaborator inflamed nationalist sentiment. Few foreign architects have built in Russia, and Koolhaas is virtually unknown there. Koolhaas, however, had a strategy for winning over the Russian public.

"It would be good to stage an exhibit of OMA's recent work at the Hermitage," he told Piotrovsky and Matveyev at one point. "The show would help us explain ourselves to Russia."

Conveniently enough, a travelling exhibition of OMA's designs, called "Content," had recently been on view in Berlin; the displays were now packed in boxes, Koolhaas said, ready for shipment to St. Petersburg. "Setting it up would cost four hundred thousand euros," he said. An architect spends his life asking for things he will not get, and Koolhaas was poised in his nerviness: he did not smile, nor did he acknowledge that the exhibit would have the side effect of glorifying him.

Piotrovsky seemed thrown off balance. "You would need to find a Dutch partner to help fund this," he said.

Koolhaas was prepared for this volley. He told Piotrovsky that he had just visited the Dutch consul-general in town, who had expressed interest in making a donation. He could procure additional funds from wealthy supporters, like Miuccia Prada, the clothing designer, for whom he has designed two ornate emporiums, in Manhattan and Beverly Hills.

“To develop a relationship with Prada would be nice,” Matveyev said wistfully.

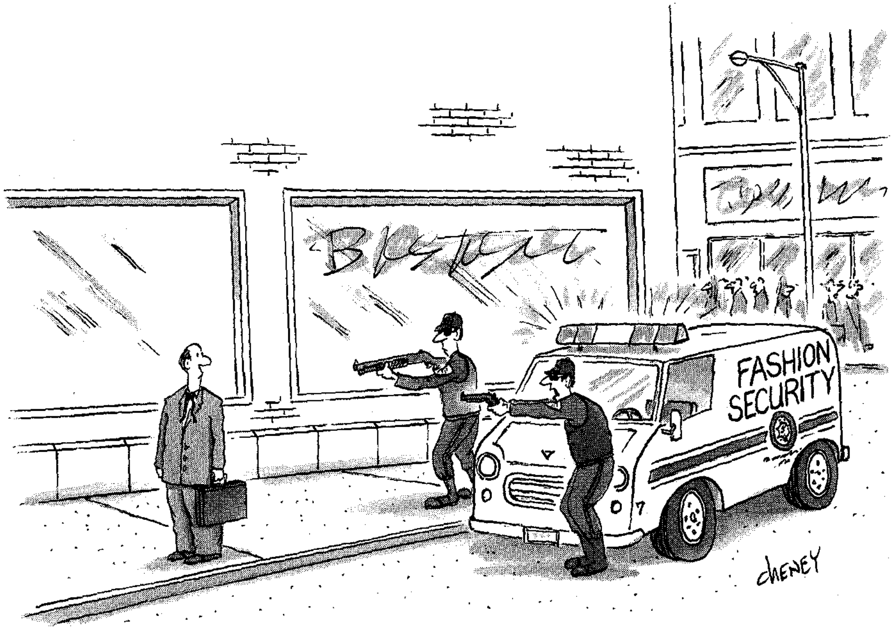
Koolhaas proposed staging the exhibit in the General Staff Building’s most neglected rooms, many of which hadn’t been inhabited since Stalin’s era, and had crumbling ceilings and potholed floors. “Let us infiltrate the old spaces—it cannot be barbaric enough!” he urged. “It would be smart to make this exhibit a preview of the larger project.” One of the perversities of the Hermitage proposal—and OMA projects frequently combine severe logic with calculated folly—was that it called for most of the General Staff Building’s rooms to remain just as they are. Koolhaas deplored the chaste white-walled look of contemporary museums. (This opinion was implicitly critical of Yoshio Taniguchi’s expansion of the Museum of Modern Art, a commission that Koolhaas lost in 1997.) The Hermitage, he believed, was a fascinating artifact of Russian imperial grandeur and Soviet bureaucratic neglect. Instead of erasing that history, why not highlight it? “It would be so original,” he said. Piotrovsky nodded, hesitantly.

Koolhaas asked Piotrovsky if the Hermitage could commission translations of his writings for an exhibition catalogue. Until the late nineties, Koolhaas was known primarily as an architectural theorist. His 1978 book “Delirious New York,” a “retroactive manifesto” that chronicles the emergence of a “Culture of Congestion” in Manhattan during the nineteen-twenties and thirties, is the most exuberant celebration of urban density ever written. Piotrovsky delicately suggested that it wouldn’t be easy to translate Koolhaas’s prose, which at times resembles an unspooling string of obscure epigrams (“More and more, more is more”; “The cosmetic is the new cosmic”). Even the exhibit’s title posed a problem. “I don’t think there’s a word for ‘Content’ in Russian, not in your sense of ‘content provider,’ ” Piotrovsky said.

“No, I’m sure there is a beautiful, metaphysical Russian word!” Koolhaas protested.

Piotrovsky was charmed. “We’ll figure it out,” he said. “So the exhibition is sold. Good.”

Matveyev checked the museum’s upcoming schedule. “We could have it in September,” he said.



“Sir! Sir! Kindly remove the bolo tie and set it on the ground—nice and slow!”

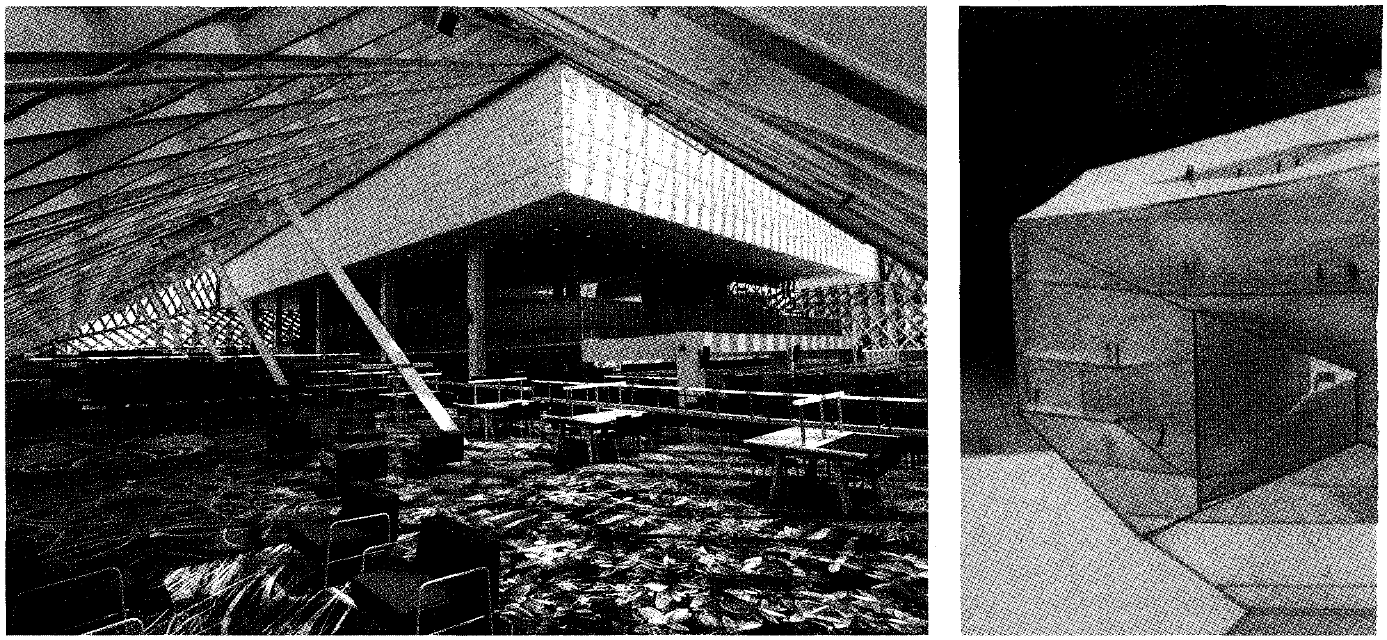
• •

The next day at noon, in one of the ballrooms of the General Staff Building, Studio 44 and Koolhaas delivered presentations to the Hermitage’s senior curators. (Piotrovsky had invited some prominent international curators—including Henri Loyrette, the director of the Louvre—to attend the presentations, presumably to shift the deliberations in an international direction.) After glimpsing Studio 44’s display, which featured a hand-painted prototype detailed enough to satisfy the most finicky model-train enthusiast, Koolhaas decided to keep his foam contraption in its box. Fortunately, his two associates had stayed up all night making digital alterations to photographs of the model, and the resulting images were more impressive.

That morning, Koolhaas had painstakingly rearranged dozens of slides into the form of an argument. He now stood before projected images that emphasized the immensity of the Hermitage’s collection, and argued that, if the General Staff Building’s interior were properly reconfigured, curators could fully exploit its eight hundred rooms. Such a plenitude, he claimed, could allow the Hermitage to experiment in singular ways. A series of slides envisaged an exhibit in which a long row of rooms contained one masterpiece each. Or why not fill several rooms a year with art of the moment, thereby creating a corridor of time capsules? Showing a slide in which a decrepit salon was filled with cheery Impressionist paintings, he encouraged the curators to overthrow the “tyranny of current museum convention.”

After a closed-door session with the curators, Koolhaas emerged into an adjoining gallery of Old Masters. He looked triumphant. The consensus, he whispered, was that OMA’s concept was superior. It was nearly a certainty that Studio 44 would build his hidden museum.

Koolhaas announced to his associates that he would take a walk through parts of the General Staff Building that are closed to the public; he wanted to meditate on how to arrange the “Content” exhibit. Puzzled guards reluctantly acceded to the request, and Koolhaas



The Reading Room in the Seattle Public Library, the building that confirmed Koolhaas's status as a reigning global "starchitect"; a mod

began loping through the halls, immediately leaving his colleagues ten paces behind. (His rapid stride is a product of multiple factors: N.B.A.-length legs, a daily swimming regimen, and an alarming intake of espresso.)

The building's layout was bewildering: gilt-covered ballrooms with intricate parquet floors adjoined rubble-strewn rooms evoking Leningrad during the Siege. Koolhaas passed through a water-damaged room with rotting windowsills; in the center was a wooden stepladder covered in snowdrifts of dust. "There is beauty in deterioration," he said. "It's totally hypnotic." He thought that this room might be an appealing place to display models of his most luxurious designs. "The blatant juxtaposition could be exciting," he said.

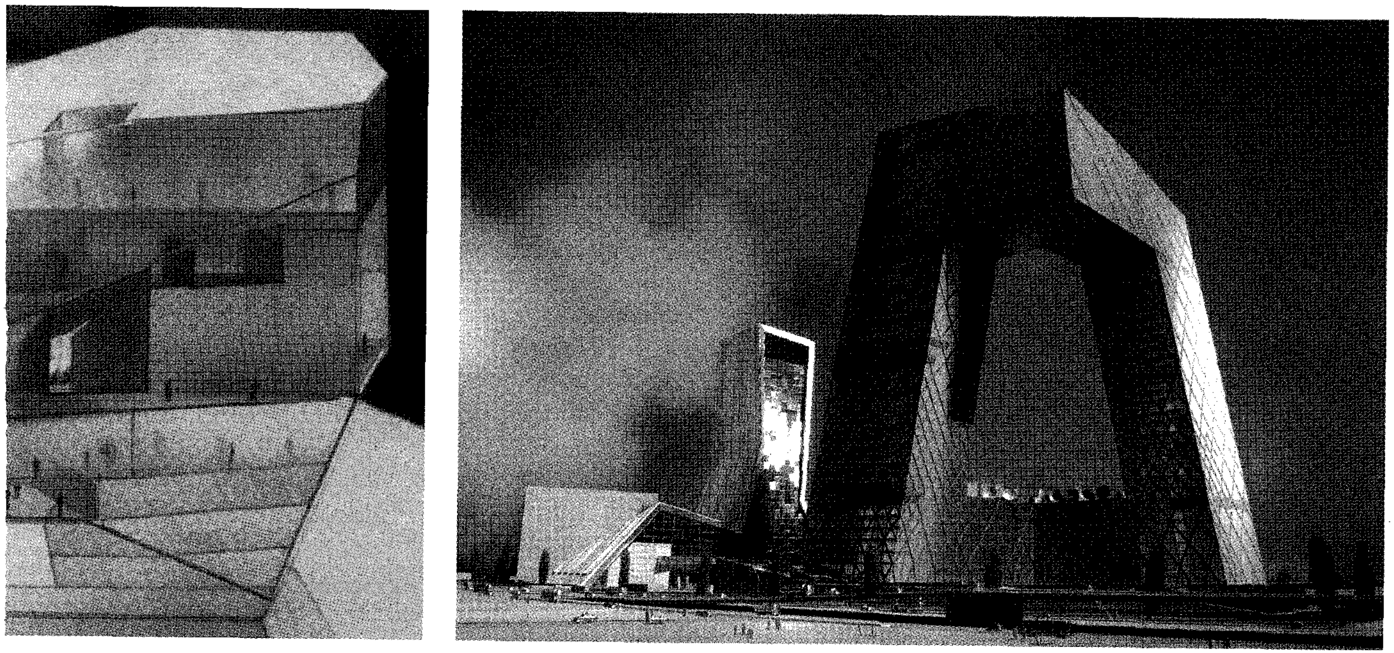
Koolhaas paused outside a former office with yellowed Soviet-era wallpaper; on the floor was an abandoned pile of fluorescent lights. This room, he suggested, was perfect just as it was. "In the U.S., you had Dan Flavin," he said, laughing. "Here is the Soviet version." He was wearing his overcoat again; as he flitted between rooms, the lightweight fabric fanning out behind him, he resembled a giant bat.

Could Koolhaas possibly persuade the Hermitage to place masterpieces in such inglorious settings? His proposal was refreshingly playful, but masterpieces aren't playthings, at least to the people who own them. And Koolhaas had foundered in the past by pushing conceptual fillips too far. His failed bid to expand the Modern—in which he named a central tower "MOMA, Inc."—had snidely emphasized the commercialism of contemporary museums. Yet he was in a much stronger position now than he had been a decade ago, when he was a provocateur with a slim portfolio. "S, M, L, XL," a massive scrapbook that Koolhaas published in 1995, was in part a burial ground for unbuilt projects. Concerns about cost and feasibility had prevented him from realizing his most ingenious designs, like a 1993 proposal for the Jussieu Library, in Paris, in which the book stacks were placed on platforms connected by a series of ramps, or a 1998 plan to build an airport atop an artificial island off the coast of the Netherlands. Six years ago, however, OMA won the commission for the Seattle library, and the firm suddenly began to flourish. Since then, it has built one major public project after another. A new Dutch Embassy in Berlin was completed in 2003, and was hailed as a masterwork by the European press. The Casa da Música, a music hall in Porto, Portugal, whose auditorium features an enormous window behind the stage—the glass is rippled, in the manner of a velvet curtain—officially opens next month. Koolhaas wouldn't know for years whether he'd succeed in turning the Hermitage into a "curatorial laboratory," but he was determined to make the most of what he called "the afterglow of Seattle." Success was making his proposals bolder still.

Koolhaas has what he calls a "socialist sensibility," and he was convinced that the Russian state, even in its current capitalist phase, was an ideal client for him. He rejects the idea that Communism became a relic of history in 1989. In a recent essay, he acknowledged that Communists were responsible for a "body count that hovers around a hundred million victims," but he argued that "every architect carries the Utopian gene," and that "the more radical, innovative, and brotherly our sentiments, the more we architects need a strong sponsor." At the St. Petersburg airport, he had stopped to visit an empty Stalinist terminal. "It's very festive, isn't it?" he said about a ceiling fresco that depicted paratroopers floating amid the clouds, like armed putti. "What I love about Russia is that the fantasy level here is higher than anywhere else."

A few hours after the lecture, a luncheon was held for Koolhaas and Studio 44 in a new restaurant on the ground floor of the General Staff Building. "Here is proof of the danger of renovation," Koolhaas observed wryly upon entering the dining area, which had the bland loucheness of a small-town discothèque. In his 2001 essay "Junkspace," a wicked analysis of the way interior space is now subjected to ephemeral "upgrades" and serial remodelling, there is a de-

LEFT: PRAGNESH PARIKH/COURTESY OMA/LMN; CENTER AND RIGHT: HANS WERLEMANN/HECTIC PICTURES/OMA



r the Casa da Música, which officially opens next month in Porto, Portugal; and a model for the CCTV building, in Beijing.

scription that eerily matched the look of the restaurant: "There are no walls, only partitions, shimmering membranes frequently covered in mirror or gold. . . . Earthlings now live in a kindergarten grotesque."

Having completed what he called "the political theatre" of the presentation, Koolhaas avoided further schmoozing. He sat near the end of the table, across from a shy young woman who had an entry-level job at the Hermitage. "Tell me something, were you a Young Pioneer?" he asked, explaining that she looked as if she would have been a child in the final years of the Soviet regime.

"Yes," the woman said warily.

"Are you a Communist?"

"No!" she said, clearly affronted. "We are not nostalgic for Communism here."

For the first time during his trip to Russia, Koolhaas looked disappointed. "I would never suggest that you should be *nostalgic*," he said, his brow furrowed. "I hate nostalgia."

The morning after the St. Petersburg presentation—a Saturday—Koolhaas was back at work in Rotterdam, a dull, efficient port city that looks more American than European. Rotterdam's multilaned streets are better suited for cars than for pedestrians, and most of its neighborhoods are less than fifty years old; the town's historic districts were obliterated by the Nazis. Koolhaas, who lives in a humdrum apartment tower overlooking the Meuse River, finds the city "completely nondescript," and greatly prefers it to the "repulsive quaintness and irritating canals" of Amsterdam, his home town. (His father, Anton, was an editor at a left-wing newspaper there; his mother was a costume designer.) As with most of Koolhaas's oppositional postures, his calculated embrace of Rotterdam, which is the commercial center of the Netherlands, both isolates and spotlights him. Whereas his European rivals huddle together in Paris and London, Koolhaas stands alone. "I am Rotterdam's most important citizen," he said with mock hauteur.

Koolhaas became an architect almost by accident. He started out in the mid-sixties as a journalist and screenwriter. For a Dutch weekly, he wrote profiles of Federico Fellini and other cultural figures. His only produced film, "White Slave"—completed in 1969, when he was twenty-four, in collaboration with the director René Daalder—is a bizarre fantasia about a Dutch girl who becomes an unwilling concubine in Africa. The movie bombed, and a project with Russ Meyer, the cult director of "Faster, Pussycat! Kill! Kill!," never took off. Feeling stymied, Koolhaas decided, at twenty-five, to change professions, and moved to London to study architecture. In 1975, he founded OMA. The switch from movies to architecture wasn't so extreme, he claims: "Design is all about entrances and exits. People say my buildings are episodic, and I consider that a compliment." Indeed, Koolhaas's buildings have a cinematic sense of continuity: rooms dissolve into one another. The new Casa da Música in Porto, for example, uses angled ramps to sweep you from the ground floor, past a succession of increasingly dramatic spaces—a futuristic aluminum-clad ticketing area, a glass-floored cocktail bar—and through a stage-side entry into an auditorium sheathed in gold leaf. Before heading to your seat, you face the crowd and feel, for a moment, the thrill of being a performer.

OMA's current headquarters, in a sedate seven-story building downtown, is pure junkspace. The firm first occupied the top floor, but, when it grew, it nonsensically acquired additional space on the first and second floors, condemning staffers to constant elevator use. On Sunday afternoon, as Koolhaas inspected ongoing projects on the second floor, he walked to a balcony overlooking the first floor and nodded with satisfaction at the grid of beige workspaces below, which could have been lifted from an Atlanta office park. All you could see outside the long row of windows was a four-lane road with the occasional car zipping by. "This is one of my favorite views," he said. "It is a testament to globalization. It is banal, it affords no pleasure, it could be anywhere." He smiled. "There are no distractions here." Koolhaas doesn't even have domestic distractions in Rotterdam. His wife of thirty-four years, Madelon Vriesendorp, an artist, lives in London. (They have two grown children, a son and a daughter.)

Somewhere on the first floor, a radio was playing bouncy Europop—a weekend indulgence for OMA's staff of a hundred architects, who typically work eighty or more hours a week. The associates were almost all under forty, and many came from distant cities: Lagos, Tokyo, Moscow. (A thousand architects seek jobs at OMA each year.) Speaking in an accented, hypernuanced English that facilitated fierce debates on whether a particular design should be "brutal," "blatant," or "congested," the designers had absorbed Koolhaas's intonations as well as his ideas; even the Americans on the staff spoke with a vaguely European lilt. Almost uniformly attractive and fashionably dressed, the staff nevertheless exuded an odd research-lab sexlessness. They had all come to Holland to design—as much as humanly possible. One of OMA's best architects, Shohei Shigematsu, was envied for his surgical-resident stamina: he could design for forty-eight hours straight before crashing.

Such Stakhanovite commitment is necessary at a firm where so much creative labor is wasted. Even in the wake of the Seattle triumph, OMA builds only a fifth of what it designs—a typical ratio for an experimental firm. In December, OMA's bid to transform Les Halles, the shopping arcades in Paris, using colored-glass towers shaped like perfume bottles, was rejected in favor of a meek French plan. In a particularly galling development, the Genoa-based architect Renzo Piano—who became famous for the pointedly weird Pompidou Center but whose recent designs pay gingerly respect to neighborhood "context"—has become the official staid alternative to the brash Koolhaas. Last year, both the Whitney Museum and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art abandoned expansion plans by the volatile Dutchman and enlisted the charming Italian. (At the Whitney, an aggressively bulky structure proposed by OMA, featuring a menacing trapezoidal overhang, has been replaced by a decorous tower.) "We spend so much energy on projects that we believe in but that don't go anywhere—it's psychologically draining," Koolhaas said. "And financially ruinous." In the mid-nineties, OMA nearly went bankrupt.

Some of OMA's troubles can be blamed, associates say, on Koolhaas's brusque manner. He is exacting about those few projects which actually get built—and he is willing to harangue clients who dither about approving a design or contractors who resist his choice of materials. (Koolhaas likes to quote Dostoyevsky: "Why do we have a mind, if not to get our own way?") During my visit to Rotterdam, he sometimes directed orders at his Dutch project managers by spittle-screaming into his cell phone in his native tongue, which, in its more splenetic forms, is relatively transparent to an English speaker: "*Idioot!*"; "*Dom!*" Upon hanging up, he would glide back into polite conversation, suggesting that what I had witnessed was not uncontrolled rage but, rather, calculated manipulation—the rhetorical companion to his tactical use of wit. Once, in a discussion with an OMA staffer about a resistant client, he displayed both strategies at the same time. "Don't worry," he said, raising an eyebrow. "I will throw a quick tantrum, and then we will proceed as planned."

We ventured up to OMA's crowded top floor, where designers were fiddling with models. Kunle Adeyemi, an amiable Nigerian architect in his late twenties, sat at a long table, amassing more than a dozen blue foam versions of apartment towers for an upcoming competition to build a new residential neighborhood in Seoul. In some versions, the towers were smoothly scalloped; others had the jagged outlines of an accordion. The goal at this early stage, Adeyemi told me, was to try things that were "totally wacko." That comment made me smile, but Koolhaas didn't want me to get the wrong idea. "We never submit ideas, even jokes, to the laugh test," he told me. "The only test is the intelligence test."

Most firms make models for presentation purposes only. At OMA, Koolhaas told me, models—quickly whittled from foam—are one of the primary mediums through which a design's intelligence is tested. This approach stems partly from the fact that Koolhaas has no particular interest in drawing. "In terms of sketches, maybe you'll get something scrawled in a fax," one OMA associate told me. Designers such as Gehry and Libeskind are gifted with a pencil, and often establish a building's form on paper. (One critic has called Gehry's Guggenheim Bilbao "a sketch you can walk into.") They have a deft, idiosyncratic "master's hand" that informs all their office's work; the undulating façade of a Gehry building is instantly recognizable. Koolhaas's un-

"Oh, God! Here comes little Miss Perky."

polished draftsmanship could be seen as a handicap, but it actually opens him up creatively. Whereas Gehry's buildings tend to be circumscribed by his tendency to draw with sensual curves, Koolhaas has no fixed repertoire of artistic flourishes. After rigorously researching a client's needs, Koolhaas and his staff generate possibilities for a complementary form, sometimes producing more than thirty designs before identifying the smartest one—which, to Koolhaas, "is usually the one that is the most beautiful as well." In the end, OMA buildings tend not to look alike, although they share a certain geometric roughness that derives from having been initially fashioned by a razor blade, rather than by a pencil or a computer mouse. In the same way that you can envision the block of marble from which Michelangelo sculpted his "Moses," you can practically see the block of foam from which an OMA building was carved.

The shapes of OMA designs are frequently altered by Cecil Balmond, a Sri Lankan engineer at Ove Arup, a London firm. He and Koolhaas have collaborated for almost two decades. In the early design phase, Balmond freely tweaks what he calls OMA's "strange prismatic forms," moving a strut or extending a cantilevered section to improve a building's balance. Other architects, Balmond said, would be infuriated by such meddling, but Koolhaas "has always understood that form and structure aren't separate concerns."

Another reason that OMA's buildings lack an obvious stylistic trademark is that they are the creations of a collective. Koolhaas often functions more as an editor than as a designer: the only pen he uses is a Bic Cristal red ballpoint, which is well suited for marking up the sketches of others. Ole Scheeren, one of Koolhaas's four senior partners, told me, "People think that Rem creates everything, but he doesn't. He often reacts to the creations of his staff." Joshua Ramus, the partner in charge of the Seattle library project, said, "The remarkable thing of which Rem is the author, explicitly, is the office's process. A thousand years from now, that's what people will say was truly new about Rem. What the OMA process focusses on is not the creator but the critic. In our way of working, the important person is the one who is shown various options and then makes a critical decision. The result is better architecture."

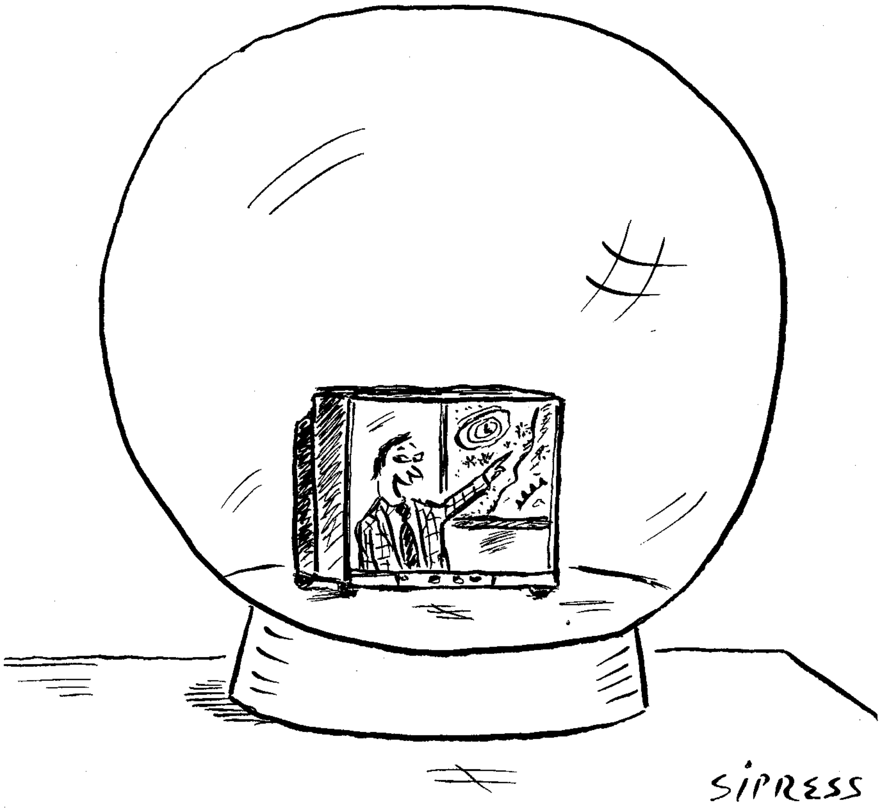
At the same time that Koolhaas was fulminating against the "vulgar desire to impose flashy new form" on cities like St. Petersburg, he was attempting to erect the most breathtaking building of his career—in Beijing. "Beijing is a huge, growing city where hundreds of generic new buildings are put up each year," he explained. "Unlike St. Petersburg, it could stand a new icon." In December, 2002, OMA won a competition to design new headquarters for CCTV, the Central Chinese Television Network. The commission was part of China's effort to enliven Beijing's skyline before the city hosts the 2008 Summer Olympics. One of OMA's rivals for the four-million-square-foot project had been Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, the large New York-based firm, which had proposed an extremely tall skyscraper. The structure that OMA had imagined was more than seven hundred and fifty feet high, but it was no mere tower. A hulking vertical loop clad in glass and steel, OMA's creation looked less like an office building than like a Brobdingnagian sculpture.

As always with Koolhaas, creation came out of critique. Seven decades after the birth of the Empire State Building, the skyscraper had, he concluded, become a shopworn form. Moreover, although tall buildings had enlivened tiny Manhattan, they had deadened spread-out cities like Bangkok, where isolated towers were engulfed by giant parking lots. It was time, Koolhaas believed, to "kill the skyscraper." (The fact that Koolhaas had initially become famous for writing "Delirious New York" only made this contrarian position more alluring to him.) In this spirit, OMA's designers had gleefully crumpled the traditional skyscraper. Starting with a tall, city-block-size tower, they bent it at several points until the two ends joined together. The building's contorted shape was simultaneously thrilling and frightening. The vertical segments of the loop tilted at precariously Pisan angles, and looked incapable of supporting the horizontal section at the top, which would float some forty stories above the ground.

Transforming this idea into a feasible structure had required a particularly intense exchange with Cecil Balmond, the engineer, and his partners at Ove Arup. At the engineers' urging, the overhanging section at the top of the loop was gradually made less extreme. And when Balmond's office sent OMA a cross-hatched image showing which parts of the loop would bear maximum stress loads, Koolhaas appropriated the diagram as the design motif for the building's façade. Koolhaas explained that he wants his buildings "to be readable. I want someone looking at CCTV to understand why it stands up." He described the building's spiderweb pattern of steel and glass, which becomes denser in spots requiring more support, as "structure made visible"—the modern equivalent of flying buttresses.

Koolhaas recalled that he had been invited to participate in the CCTV competition soon after September 11, 2001. Around the same time, he was asked to submit a proposal for Ground Zero, in downtown Manhattan. OMA was too small to pursue two gargantuan projects, and Koolhaas chose to "go East." In a 2003 essay, he suggested that he had declined the Ground Zero invitation because of the project's "overbearing self-pity": its goal, he argued, was "not to restore the city's vitality or shift its center of gravity, but to create a monument at a scale that monuments have never existed." Perhaps Koolhaas's decision was itself tinged with self-pity. OMA's previous attempts to build in Manhattan—including a boutique hotel for Ian Schrager at Astor Place—had failed, and Koolhaas appeared unwilling to sustain another blow to his pride.

In July, 2002, just before the results of the CCTV competition were announced, Koolhaas flew to Beijing with Ole Scheeren, his partner on the project. They brought a plaster model of the loop. Koolhaas was told by Chinese architects that his model would confuse literal-minded Communist leaders, who would think that OMA wanted to build not a glass tower but a supersized Arc de Triomphe. Koolhaas scrambled to find a model-builder in a city he barely knew. He eventually found a sweatshop—one with "ample child labor," he later wrote—willing to do the job, and, four days later, he had a transparent show-



"We're expecting some major accumulation."

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piece to present to the Communist élite. Koolhaas, who finds morally uncomfortable situations strangely exhilarating, sent a fax to Balmond describing his sweatshop adventure as "complex fun."

The revised model was warmly received, and OMA was officially declared the winner. Groundbreaking was said to be imminent. After facing so much frustration in the timid, budget-minded West, Koolhaas felt that he had finally arrived in "the territory of invention." All his life, he had yearned for the creative anarchy of Jazz Age Manhattan. He had found it in Delirious Beijing.

Then the project became mired in familiar doubts. Beijing is almost as earthquake-prone as Los Angeles, and Chinese engineers questioned the design's stability. Beijing intellectuals criticized its expense—perhaps eight hundred million dollars. The country couldn't afford such a building, one Chinese critic said; it was acting like a "rich peasant" who wastes his savings on a single bauble. Others accused Koolhaas of exploiting a sense of cultural inferiority. Wu Liangyong, a professor at Tsinghua University, told a Chinese magazine, "When foreign architects come to China acting like architectural masters, it is a direct result of the sad fact that Chinese people like to call foreigners gods."

By August, 2003, the resistance to the CCTV project had become formidable. That month, Koolhaas returned to Beijing to address skeptics at a symposium at Tsinghua University. It was a riveting act of persuasion. During his half-hour talk, he reoriented the discussion about the building's most controversial feature: its startling shape. The loop, he said, was not a "freakish" experiment but, rather, a building whose form embodied the Chinese tradition of collectivism. He explained, "In the market economy, a TV company like CCTV would put its studios outside the city, because it was cheaper; it would put its business people into the Central Business District, because it was supposedly more efficient; it would put its creative people in an old part of town, so that they would be happy and nostalgic, and basically all these parties would hate each other. What I think is a unique feature—and I think it is one of these things that is only possible in China right now because of the nature of the Chinese state and economy—is that all these elements, which in a market economy would be atomized and pulled apart, can be integrated in a single whole." The CCTV tower was, he said, a "diagram" of "collective inhabitation," a design that "you would never do anywhere else."

The CCTV network is subject to government censorship, and OMA's building was seen by many Chinese dissidents as a glass temple of propaganda. In his speech, Koolhaas hinted to reformists in the audience that the building was, in fact, politically subversive. "We are deeply aware that this is not an innocent project, and we have considered our own values very carefully," he said. "We have chosen to participate in China now because we believe that the process of modernization needs pressure from within." And he played against the perception that he was a Western carpetbagger by emphasizing his own anti-Americanism. The United States, he said, was "increasingly isolated from the world and increasingly developing a very harsh vision of the future of the world." He added, "This withdrawal of America from the world, in a certain way, also provides an incredible opportunity for the rest of the world to abandon a number of Americanisms." Kill the skyscraper, Koolhaas was proclaiming, and the global revolution can begin!

The audience greeted Koolhaas's remarks with vigorous applause, but his strong rhetoric once more proved unavailing. A year later, he was still waiting. Now much of OMA's Rotterdam office looked like a forlorn museum dedicated to the stalled project. On the office's ground floor, nineteen models of the loop were on view, from disposable posterboard renditions to shiny metallic structures that were nearly as tall as the boss. A few of the models depicted parts of the building's interior, such as the observation deck in the overhanging top section; the designers had considered making a part of the floor transparent, offering a vertiginous view of the ground below.

On Sunday afternoon, I was surprised to see a new CCTV prototype being carted out from the fabrication shop, which is hidden in the back of the office's first floor. It looked like a freshly baked cake being set out to cool. "We have never stopped working on this project, despite the lag in approval," Koolhaas said as he inspected a model that detailed a possible landscape arrangement. "It will really hurt us financially if this doesn't work out."

Koolhaas ran into Ole Scheeren, who is an ambitious, sapling-thin thirty-four-year-old from Germany. Scheeren had just flown in the previous night from Beijing, and he looked both exhausted and excited.

"Tell me, what is the mood in China?" Koolhaas asked.

"Pretty optimistic," Scheeren said. The country was giddy about its success at the Olympic Games, which had just ended in Athens. "Thousands of young women were at the Beijing airport to greet returning athletes," he said. Both men saw this as a good sign—perhaps this fresh wave of Olympic enthusiasm would overwhelm the government's reserve.

Scheeren shared other good news. During his trip, he had met with a Party official, who had hinted that the government was inching toward approval of a smaller OMA project in Beijing: a renovation of the city's largest bookstore. "He was very reassuring," he said.

Koolhaas was delighted—if OMA had a powerful supporter in the Party, perhaps the CCTV project would secure approval, too. He tried to place the official's name. "Is that the tall one?"

"No, the short one."

"Good! He's the smart one."

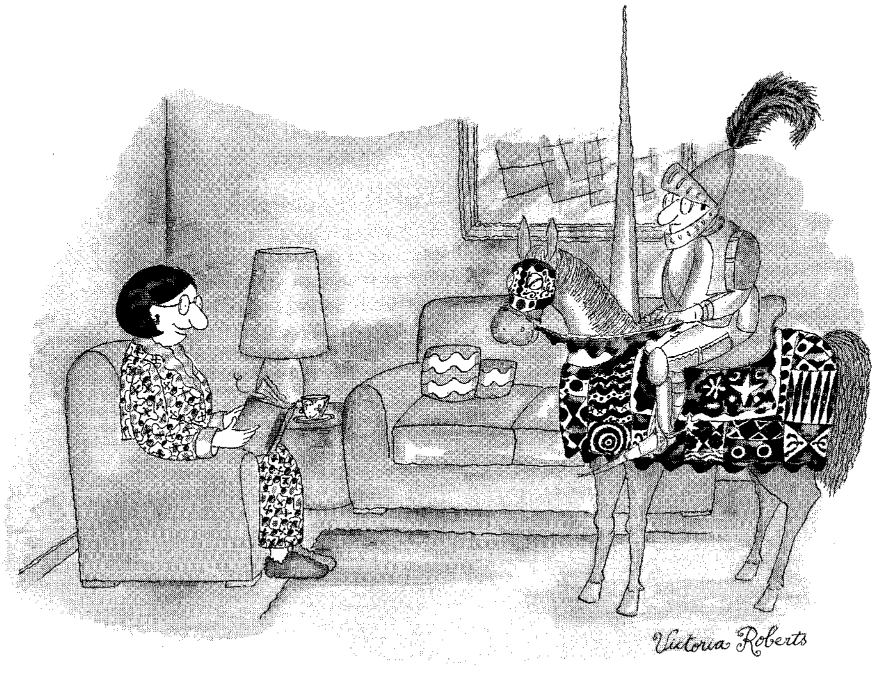
Koolhaas walked up to a second-floor landing, and we looked down at his sprawling city of CCTV buildings. I asked him if he felt confident that his Beijing fantasy would be realized. "I am very worried," he said. "I am *always* very worried. Architecture can die at any time. Look at what happened in Los Angeles with Frank Gehry and Disney Hall. That building was in a coma for eleven years."

One of Koolhaas's most heartfelt essays is "Crib Death," a short piece that he published last year. It's about the moment when an architect realizes that his beloved newborn design is not going to survive: "You double your efforts—wax more eloquent, convince every skeptic, invest in the most peripheral contact, but you have seen the cold, cloudy eyes of waning commitment. Each handshake reinforces the imminence of separation." He concludes that most clients, when confronted with bold architecture, are "not alive enough to want it, but strong enough to kill it."

In many ways, OMA functions as an eternal architecture-school seminar, with Koolhaas in the role of professor. To develop ideas for the Seattle library, team members spent three months on an ethnographic journey. They visited more than twenty new libraries around the world, from San Francisco to Berlin, interviewing and observing staff and patrons. Their survey pinpointed a number of problems. In San Francisco, for example, Internet-fuelled prophecies about the demise of the book had created serious shelf shortages. All the libraries had expanses of gloomy, interchangeable rooms—another row of bookshelves, another row of desks—that proved more inviting to homeless people than to patrons.

Only after this extensive academic phase—the insights from which are sometimes later collected in books—do the architects suggest design solutions. To give the library a sun-filled interior, the architects decided to clad the building in glass tiles. But then there was a concern that, at midday, some rooms might become too bright for comfortable reading. Joshua Ramus proposed embedding the skyward-facing tiles with a fine aluminum mesh—miniblinds so mini that they wouldn't be seen from afar. Such a mesh couldn't be purchased from a catalogue: OMA would have to invent it. Koolhaas loved the idea. He is drawn to any concept that has never been tried before.

Koolhaas's emphasis on creating useful designs means that OMA tends to imagine its buildings from the inside out—unlike many firms, which start with an ostentatious façade. Before my visit to the Seattle library, he said dryly, "You'll notice that *my* masterpiece actually has an interior." Whereas the cramped, dark museum hidden inside the Guggenheim Bilbao's titanium sheath feels like an afterthought, the Seattle library has many beautiful, functional rooms. The spacious Reading Room, on the tenth floor, has vivid red and purple couches and brightly patterned carpeting, and is surrounded by angled curtains of glass that offer energizing views of downtown. In conceiving the library, Koolhaas said, the design team first established the ideal shapes and locations of the main interior components: the Reading Room; a reference area (goofily named the Mixing Chamber); a lobby; administrative offices; conference rooms; and the Book Spiral, an update of the



"Didn't anybody tell you, Walter? You can't change the past."

unrealized Jussieu concept, in which a series of gentle ramps would give patrons access to the library's entire collection without the need for an elevator. After the designers had stacked these rooms one on top of another, like birthday presents, they simply wrapped the assemblage in a net of glass and steel. The building's curiously pleasing exterior angles are, in a sense, a mere by-product.

One afternoon, in OMA's small New York office, on Varick Street, I watched Koolhaas review a preliminary design for a theatre in Dallas. A cube on stilts, the building featured a modular interior that would accommodate a variety of staging arrangements. The area beneath the cube would be wrapped in glass panels that could be opened when the weather was pleasant, connecting the building to a surrounding public plaza. After a two-minute perusal of the exterior design, Koolhaas made a series of crisp requests to a group of associate architects. "I would like the cube to have more the appearance of floating," he said. Too many of the stilts were vertical, he explained; if some of the steel supports were angled more sharply, the elevated cube would look more mysterious. The bottom of the building, he said, "should look more like a billowing skirt than a prison cage."

Koolhaas's comments are often withering, and he is particularly severe when a design element seems arbitrary. Shown an alternative version of the Dallas design, he questioned a girder that didn't appear to be supporting any weight. "This version is the most annoying of all!" he said. "What is the purpose of this sculptural element? It looks willful." Nothing is approved at OMA just because it looks cool. A defense of its function, or its conceptual appeal, must be made. (The defenseless girder vanished.)

To survive this process, OMA architects must be verbally as well as visually dextrous. Koolhaas becomes impatient when a colleague's language is wan or imprecise—"I really dislike the word 'interesting,' " he told me. When an associate cannot give a clear explanation for a design decision, Koolhaas chides him by saying, "You are not fully exploiting my intelligence." Late one night, after a frustrated associate who was battling a tight deadline pleaded, "I'm tired, I can't keep playing Ping-Pong like this," Koolhaas responded tersely: "Make it perfect. And then the game will be over."

The firm is so focussed on the interrogation of ideas that it can be hard to determine who contributed an idea in the first place. In Rotterdam, nobody would answer the question "Who came up with the notion of bending a skyscraper into a loop?" Koolhaas said that he wasn't sure. Scheeren evaded the question. Joshua Ramus eventually told me that the loop was the inspiration of a project architect named Fernando Donis. Yet to obsess over credit was to misunderstand OMA, Ramus explained. "Our creative process is very horizontal," he said. "As for where ideas come from, we don't care if it's Rem, me, or a student who's been in the office for thirty seconds."

Koolhaas told me that when he was first shown the loop concept he immediately admired its "terrifying beauty." Still, he hesitated. "Peter Eisenman had once proposed a Möbius-strip building for Berlin, and I don't like to follow others," he said. "But then an associate reminded me that in 'Delirious New York' I myself had imagined a building that loops around the Queensborough Bridge. I must have had a vague memory of it—an unconscious resonance. We decided that we could proceed."

On Monday afternoon, Koolhaas learned that a vice-president of CCTV was flying to Rotterdam at the end of the week. It was unclear whether he was coming to cancel the project or to approve it. The office mood remained tense until Wednesday morning, when Koolhaas was woken by a call from a young CCTV executive who had supported OMA's design. The government, she said, had said yes—a groundbreaking ceremony would take place in three weeks. That afternoon, OMA's designers crowded into a conference room on the top floor and drank champagne. For once, Koolhaas's rhetorical flair failed him. "I am, you know, super happy," he told me.

One of Koolhaas's favorite maxims these days is "Architecture is too slow." It takes five to seven years for one of his foam models to become a finished building; by that time, Koolhaas believes, the ideas that made the design "a response to the culture" have often grown stale. (Imagine, he suggested to me, if every movie released this year had been filmed in 1998.) All new architecture, by this logic, is already old. "This is one of many reasons that I inhabit a painful profession," he said.

The first time I heard him lament slowness, it was in a speech delivered last March, at a party in a Manhattan ballroom celebrating OMA's latest publication, *Content.* Resembling a visually hectic magazine, *Content* features articles that explain the thinking behind the firm's current projects. (One section presents fake patent applications for various OMA "inventions," such as the "Disconnect"—a "Method of Defining a Theater by Strict Separation of Its Components.") The magazine format, Koolhaas told the crowd, was an "experiment in dissemination." He wanted to promote OMA's ideas while they were molten, not cold steel.

The party was "staged" as a political rally by Koolhaas's friend the conceptual artist Jeff Koons. Wearing a silver Prada suit, Koolhaas delivered his comments while standing on a balcony high above the crowd, an Eva Perón of architecture. The room was strung with dozens of posters bearing the inflammatory cover of *Content*, a digital photo collage depicting three villains: Kim Jong Il, tweaked to resemble the Terminator; Saddam Hussein, bedecked in a Rambo wig; and George Bush, holding a crucifix with a pistol-packing Jesus. The illustration was ugly and infantile, and the crowd seemed more embarrassed than engaged by the spectacle. (It could have been worse: an alternative cover, printed on the magazine's final spread, featured a porn queen being penetrated by a blue foam phallus.) Koolhaas's quick-fire brain offers a steady flow of renegade ideas, most of which are exciting, and some of which are simply foolish. If architecture is too slow, Koolhaas is too fast.

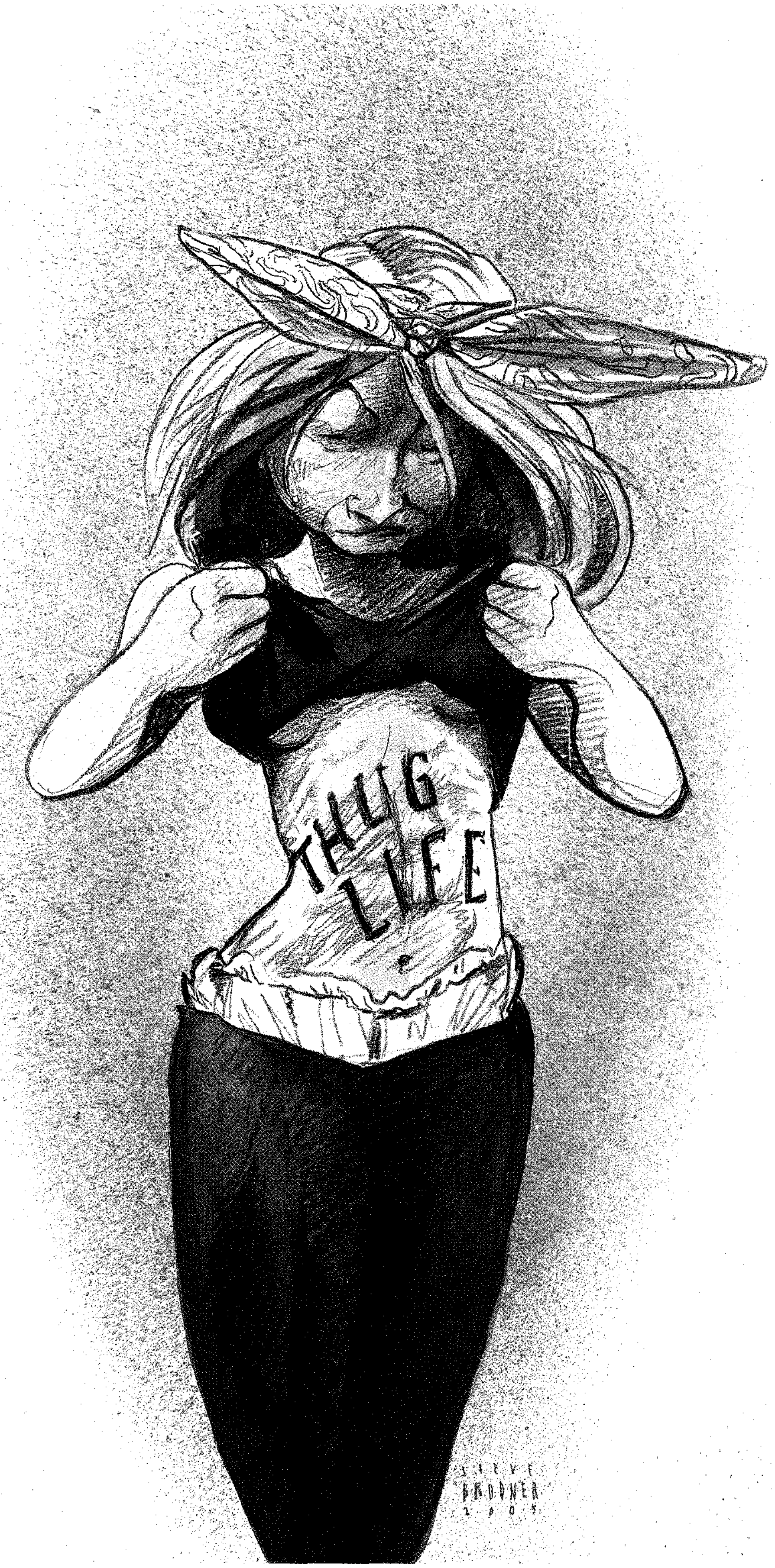
The morning after he got word that the CCTV project was to be built, after all, Koolhaas drove to Brussels in his 1998 BMW 840. Most of the way, he went a hundred and ten m.p.h. A driver had been hired by one of OMA's four secretaries—officially known as PARKs, for "Personal Assistant Rem Koolhaas"—to escort the boss to Belgium, but he had shown up twenty minutes late. Koolhaas had fumed while the driver placed his jacket in the trunk, then suddenly fired him, jumping in the front seat and speeding away with the jacket. "Revenge," he said, chuckling.

Ninety minutes later, we arrived at Place Robert Schuman, in downtown Brussels. "There it is!" Koolhaas cried out. Before us, in the middle of a busy traffic roundabout, stood a new structure that OMA had built in less than a week: a circus tent. It was still empty, but within days it would contain a three-ring exhibit chronicling the history of Europe and, more recently, the European Union, the headquarters of which were nearby. (The exhibit was sponsored by the Dutch government.) The plastic tent was patterned with fifty-two bands of bright colors, representing the flags of E.U. member countries. "Most people think the E.U. is incredibly boring and gray, so the idea is to make a bit of mischief in Brussels," Koolhaas explained as we circled the structure. The tent was a delightful stunt, reanimating a dead city block. Koolhaas told me that the firm had come up with the idea only four months earlier. For an architect, this was instant gratification.

The exhibit itself, which had been created by members of Koolhaas's staff, was an overblown collage of clip-art images and text blocks presenting random factoids and statistics about each E.U. member country. Strewn with typos and errors, the exhibit was borderline unprofessional, but Koolhaas didn't mind. He loves to stretch beyond architecture, and isn't afraid of looking silly in the process. Later, he told me that the central pleasure of the E.U. project was the proximity it afforded him to the organization's top officials. "I would be interested in entering politics myself at some point," he said.

After making sure that the circus

MARTHA RELEASED BY STEVE BRODNER



tent accorded with his specifications, Koolhaas met with a morose group of E.U. officials to plan an opening-night party. He requested that traffic be diverted from the roundabout that evening. The idea was rejected. He acquiesced reluctantly, joking, "It is always the people with the ideas who are considered nasty."

Later, Koolhaas drove to the train station and parked his car. He would be spending the night in Paris, to campaign for his doomed Les Halles project. At the station, he rushed around, buying a dozen magazines at the newsstand, from *Der Spiegel* to *W;* he stuffed them inside the duty-free shopping bags that he carries instead of luggage, and, in the whirl, he lost his train ticket only minutes after buying it. (In my presence, Koolhaas also lost his cell phone and his glasses. One of the Rotterdam PARKs told me that she keeps multiple copies of his car keys on hand.) Koolhaas, unflustered, bought a new ticket. He is accustomed to the discombobulations of travel. In "S, M, L, XL," he claimed to have logged two hundred and twenty-four thousand miles in 1993.

Koolhaas's journeys began at an early age. In 1952, when he was eight, his father took a job at a cultural institute in Indonesia. Koolhaas abruptly found himself in a highly disorienting position—that of a European child in a Jakarta public school. "In Indonesia, all of my friends were Muslims," he recalled. "I was jealous of them for their religion, in a way. They had this smile that eluded me." The full impact of his Asian experience, however, registered only when the family returned to Holland, when he was twelve. "I was stunned by how boring and conventional and tidy everything was," he said. "But I understood that things didn't have to be that way."

As a student in London and, later, at Cornell, Koolhaas developed his attachment to Soviet architecture. He wrote a study of the visionary Constructivist Ivan Leonidov, whose dizzyingly ambitious designs were rarely built. He also studied the work of Mies van der Rohe, the austere modernist who designed the Seagram Building, Manhattan's most refined skyscraper. Koolhaas's aversion to ornamental form is highly Miesian, and he recently completed a student center at the Mies-designed campus of the Illinois Institute of Technology, in Chicago; its façade features a giant portrait of the German master.

But the affinity between them runs deeper than that. In the nineteen-twenties, when Mies was about forty, he developed an extramarital attachment to Lilly Reich, a designer of furniture and interiors. The two remained companions for more than a decade, and during that time Reich helped design furnishings for many of Mies's buildings; she shares credit for the Barcelona chair. When Koolhaas was in his forties, he found a second companion in Petra Blaisse, a Dutch interior designer known for her use of experimental fabrics. Blaisse now makes many of the unusual curtains and carpets that adorn OMA buildings, and also contributes landscape designs. On the ground floor of the Seattle library, Blaisse placed a small rectangular garden directly next to one of the building's glass walls; on the inside, she laid a carpet of identical size, patterned with a digitally scanned photograph of verdant plants. The visual pun warms up a cool design. Blaisse, who lives in Amsterdam, also provides a counterweight in temperament. At a ten-o'clock dinner one night in Rotterdam, she serenely shared news about mutual friends and was gracious when an OMA staff member interrupted dessert to show Koolhaas page proofs of the Brussels exhibit text.

One of Koolhaas and Blaisse's most noteworthy collaborations was the Villa Floirac, which was built in Bordeaux in 1998. The building illustrates how a cerebral but sensitive assessment of a client's needs can result in a creation of aesthetic and moral beauty. The house was commissioned by a wealthy newspaper publisher who had recently been paralyzed in a car accident. Koolhaas spent weeks talking with the client. "He said, 'Since this is my entire environment, I don't want a simplistic home—I want a home with complexity,'" Koolhaas recalled. He learned that the publisher spent a lot of time in his library, reading. And he thought about the ungainly solutions that other architects had devised for the handicapped, and how they accentuated an atmosphere of depression.

Koolhaas designed a three-story, glass-and-concrete house cantilevered over a gorgeous hillside. Blaisse created a motorized curtain system that veiled the living-room windows with gossamer aqua netting; the intensely colored scrim shimmered in sunlight, making the room feel even brighter. A rectangular platform in the center of the house, placed atop a piston, provided a gracefully high-tech method for moving between floors. It supported the client's desk, and shelves placed by the platform's edge provided easy access to books. The platform could be flush with

THIS YEAR ON THE VIA VENETO...
PAPARAZZI WITH FIBER OPTICS

the floor or it could float above it—an architectural metaphor for flight which offered an immobilized man unobstructed views of the countryside.

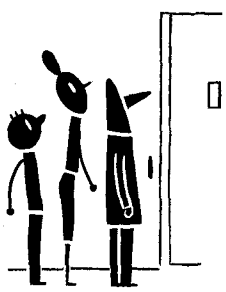
Koolhaas and I spoke about the Bordeaux house on the high-speed train between Brussels and Paris. He told me that the publisher had died a few years ago, leaving behind his wife and three children. OMA's most famous house had become funereal. "The elevator had become a monument to his absence," he said. "So we recently removed the desk and the books, transforming the platform into a lounging area, with lurid beanbag pillows and a television set. The platform is now about chaos and noise rather than order." Mies, surely, would never have made such a change. Koolhaas, however, will reinvent anything, including his own masterpiece.

Beijing has become the city of a thousand cranes. A red Communist Party flag flutters at the top of each one; viewed together, these steel spires look like masts of a giant armada that is floating over the skyline. It can be hard to see the flags, though, through the brown haze thrown up by bulldozers. (Sandstorms from the nearby Gobi desert compound the problem.) The pollution, Koolhaas said, is one reason that the CCTV design, which will be built on the periphery of the capital's new Central Business District, is so boldly graphic in shape and façade: subtlety can't be seen through smog.

Chang'an Avenue, the city's central thoroughfare, is a dour parade of medium-height office towers, most of which resemble the mirrored American models of the nineteen-eighties. In this new context, the Forbidden City and Tiananmen Square, both of which border the avenue, look diminished, as if they'd somehow been squeezed into the middle of Fort Worth. In the shadows, Old Beijing survives in the form of *hutongs*, vibrant centuries-old warrens that are filled with street life.

Much of Beijing's new architecture is being designed by foreigners. Herzog & de Meuron, a Swiss firm, has designed an elaborately latticed National Stadium for the Olympics. A new National Theatre is the work of the French architect Paul Andreu. Shaped like a clamshell, clad in blindingly reflective titanium, and surrounded by a dank moat—a corny allusion to the Forbidden City, which is surrounded by its own artificial lake—the building is ghastly, and already widely loathed. Critics of Koolhaas see the Andreu building as an ill portent, and proof that avant-garde foreign architects will make the city look ridiculous rather than modern.

Koolhaas arrived in Beijing on September 29th, the night before the CCTV groundbreaking ceremony. His hotel was on Chang'an Avenue, and although it was after eight o'clock, his taxi was soon stuck in traffic. A decade ago, Beijing was a bicycle town. Now brand-new cars clog the streets.



Night had fallen, and many of the buildings on the avenue were illuminated by bands of neon—a Las Vegas touch. As we crawled along, we could see a city under renovation. Green tarps and bamboo scaffolding covered dozens of buildings. Koolhaas pointed to several modern office towers that had comically mismatched pagoda roofs. "For a time, Communist officials required them to be placed atop every tower," he said. These buildings were considered embarrassing by many Chinese architects, Koolhaas said, but he admired some of them. "What I like is that they could only exist here," he said.

Koolhaas stopped briefly at the hotel, where he received a message informing him that OMA had lost the competition for the Seoul housing district. He was in such a buoyant mood that he hardly seemed to care. He went for a celebratory dinner with Ole Scheeren and other OMA colleagues in a bustling *hutong* next to the Forbidden City. Outdoor cafés had recently sprung up along the shores of the artificial lake. "Last summer, I swam in the lake," Koolhaas said as we walked past it. "Only old people still swim here. It's a little muddy, but it's fantastic." He told me not to expect much the next day. "I think it will be a quiet ceremony with a few government officials," he said.

The next morning, the sky was a rare clear blue. At breakfast, Koolhaas asked me if I had watched any of CCTV's English-language broadcast in my hotel room. "Its Iraq-war coverage has been less biased than CNN's," he said. He said he believed that CCTV would eventually emerge as a global news organization equivalent to the BBC.

Koolhaas's view of the network is unusually sanguine. Indeed, many Western architects were appalled when OMA agreed to design the headquarters of a state-controlled television network. In the London *Guardian*, the journalist Ian Buruma wrote, "CCTV is the voice of the party, the center of state propaganda, the organ which tells a billion people what to think. . . . It is hard to imagine a cool European architect in the nineteen-seventies building a television station for General Pinochet without losing a great deal of street cred." He asked, "What, then, is it about China that makes it O.K.? Let us assume it is not simple greed, or lust for power."

In response, Koolhaas said, "If you participate in a Chinese government project, you are critically participating in the *transformation* of the society." He has also addressed such criticism by emphasizing the new building's "transparency." The old CCTV headquarters was off limits to the public, he said, but the new loop was conceived with visitors in mind. The structure would be surrounded by a gracious public park, and tourists would crowd the observation deck on the overhang. More important, the walls of the television studios and editing rooms would be made of glass, allowing Chinese citizens to observe the production process. These were salutary gestures, but Koolhaas's belief in the power of architectural metaphor was unsettling—as if he thought an open building could single-handedly reform a closed society. Koolhaas is not a naïve man, however. It was hard not to think that some of OMA's liberatory talk was itself a form of propaganda—a way of justifying a revolutionary design that had the misfortune of being commissioned by an unsavory client.

This cynical reading was buttressed by a memo that Koolhaas sent in early 2003 to the leaders of CCTV. Urging the installation of digital transmission systems in the new headquarters, he noted that television "is the main tool for communication and plays a potentially political role," emphasizing that digital broadcasts could more easily reach China's "vast countryside, currently being put into focus by Hu Jintao," the Party's leader. (China's rural regions have become wellsprings of dissent.) Koolhaas added, "China might choose to exert some control over content for its internal political stability." China hardly needed the encouragement: in 2001, Colin Powell agreed to be interviewed by a CCTV reporter, as long as his remarks were aired unedited; the subsequent broadcast, however, deleted Powell's references to human-rights abuses. In January, CCTV followed Party orders and, for nearly two weeks, did not report the death of Zhao Ziyang, a former chief of the Communist Party, who was seen as being sympathetic toward the Tiananmen Square protesters in 1989.

As we left the hotel, Koolhaas acknowledged that CCTV sometimes parroted the Party line, but he said that many staffers were young, and the institution was in flux. "We get anxious with each moment of slippage and excited about each move forward," Koolhaas said of China.

Just before nine o'clock, Koolhaas, wearing a dark-blue suit, took a taxi that deposited him at a sooty gate on the perimeter of the CCTV site. The building will be erected on a weed-covered lot, twice as large as Ground Zero, that abuts a highway named Third Ring Road. (A car and motorcycle factory once operated there, but, like so much in Beijing, it was demolished several years ago to make room for new development.) Armed guards were stationed before the gate, making it impossible to see inside. Once he got past security, it became clear that this would not be a small ceremony. A long red-carpeted path marked by two rows of garish flower arrangements led to an imposing three-sided stage set that had been assembled in the middle of the lot. The backdrop featured several thirty-foot-high digital renderings of the building. In the most prominent version, directly behind the podium, the building had been colored Communist red.

A crowd of some two thousand people, some of them elderly Party leaders, milled about on the red carpet. In the back, a row of construction workers, clad in navy-blue uniforms and yellow hard hats, stood silently in front of a fleet of two dozen gleaming red steam shovels. Guests were given goody bags that would have impressed a Manhattan publicist: each contained a T-shirt, a coffee-table book about the building, a gold pin with the CCTV logo, and a bottle of water. The book indicated that the ceremony was to have taken place a year earlier, Koolhaas noticed. "Worth the wait," he joked.

In the center of the seating area, behind a velvet rope, a large red granite cornerstone, engraved in gold lettering, was surrounded by sand. Considering that OMA's design featured no granite, the stone was a bit disconcerting.

A CCTV executive greeted Koolhaas—the woman who had telephoned him on the day that the government gave its final go-ahead. A former news announcer for the network, she was pertly pretty, dressed in a black velvet dress and a gauzy pink scarf. "Over here are the V.I.P.s," she said, pointing to a section on the right. "Onstage are the V.V.I.P. Party members." She had to shout to be heard: a minute-long fragment of a festive Chinese tune—heavy on screeching woodwinds—blared in an endless loop.

"Let me ask you something I have always wanted to ask," Koolhaas said. "Do you have sympathy, or some support, for Communism?"

"To me, Communism is not necessarily a bad thing," she said. "It's very unrealistic. We aren't able to achieve that idealism in the current economy, but I think that it's a beautiful idea. In the best possible world, it could be beautiful."

"Yes, yes," Koolhaas said. "Beautiful."

An engineer from Cecil Balmond's firm said hello. "You want to pinch yourself, don't you?" he said.

"It's amazing," Koolhaas agreed. "They really mobilized the troops!"

Koolhaas shook hands with Communist officials, telling them, "Congratulations. This is a courageous thing to do." Meanwhile, I asked the CCTV executive if she thought the building would foster openness in the Chinese media. "Given the shape of this building, you never know what kind of effect it will have," she said.

Koolhaas sat down next to Ole Scheeren, who was dressed in a tuxedo with no tie, and the ceremony began.

TREE LIMBS DOWN

The poverty of having everything is not
wanting anything: I trudge down the mall halls

and see nothing wanting which would pick me
up: I stop at a cheap $79 piece of jewelry,

a little necklace dangler, and it has a diamond
chip in it hardly big enough to sparkle, but it

sparkles: a piece of junk, symbolically vast;
imagine, a life with a little sparkle in it, a

little sparkle like wanting something, like
wanting a little piece of shining, maybe the

world's smallest ruby: but if you have everything
the big carats are merely heavy with price and

somebody, maybe, trying to take you over: the dull
game of the comers-on, waiting everywhere like

moray eels poked out of holes: what did Christ
say, sell everything and give to the poor, and

immediacy enters; daily bread is the freshest
kind: dates, even, laid up old in larders, are

they sweet: come off sheets of the golden
desert, knees weak and mouth dry, what would

you think of an oasis, a handful of dates, and
a clear spring breaking out from under some stones:

but suppose bread can't daily be found or no
oasis materializes among the shimmers: lining

the outside of immediacy, alas, is uncertainty:
so the costly part of the crust of morning

bread is not knowing it will be there: it has
been said by others, though few, that nothing

is got for nothing: so I am reconciled: I
traipse my dull self down the aisles of

desire and settle for nothing, nothing wanted,
nothing spent, nothing got.

—*A. R. Ammons*

The president of CCTV, Zhao Huayong, walked to the podium and gave a stiff five-minute address in Chinese. "CCTV will keep serving our Communist Party and people with complete faith," he said. He was followed by Xu Guangchun, the head of the Chinese film-and-radio authority, who shouted harshly into the microphone while a CCTV cameraman stood directly in front of him. (An upbeat news segment on the ceremony was aired on the network that evening.) CCTV, Xu said, embodied "complete loyalty" to the Communist Party"; the new headquarters, he said, would become a "revolutionary symbol." The building's design was never mentioned, nor were any of the European visitors. This ceremony was clearly about politics, not architecture.

Zhao and the three Party leaders grabbed some red-ribboned shovels and began tossing sand on the cornerstone. They were followed by executives from CCTV. On round four, Koolhaas joined a line of Chinese men in suits, and hurled a few scoops. He was disoriented: he didn't understand Chinese, and didn't know whom he was standing beside. After a while, a man came up to Koolhaas and said, in English, "I saw your building in Seattle." Koolhaas looked relieved.

The loud music was playing again, but it was suddenly trumped when a stream of fireworks was released into the midmorning sky. Some cartridges had been filled with confetti and shiny ribbons that were attached to pastel plastic parachutes. The colorful debris descended slowly, covering everything, including a four-foot-high model of the CCTV building that had been placed next to the cornerstone. As if on cue, the steam shovels revved their engines and began moving their scoops up and down in unison—the command-economy version of a Busby Berkeley number.

Koolhaas's victory remained uncertain. Many elements of OMA's design could easily be scrapped during the building phase. Koolhaas, for example, wanted the loop's façade to be embedded with L.E.D.s that would light up at night, creating an electronic curtain of iconic Chinese imagery. "It complements all the neon used here," he said. "And it could add a lyrical, whimsical element." Considering the cost of such lyrical whimsy, however, he and Scheeren were concerned that the government might balk at the idea. Moreover, many interior details, Scheeren had told me, remained under discussion. "Rem has basically said, 'Let's build first, and then we'll fight those battles.'" Scheeren, who has moved to Beijing, said that he was "excited and terrified" by the challenge before him. He worried that the Chinese contractors that had been hired might not be able, or willing, to meet OMA's demanding specifications. "There is simply no model for how to build something like this in China," he said. I recalled an essay that Koolhaas had published in *Content* about the overhanging section of the loop, and how it would come together during construction. Two cantilevered sections would link at a middle point, like two hands coming together. This fusing process would be so delicate, he explained, that the engineers required that it be performed only at dawn—after the building had cooled off during the night, guaranteeing that the steel was of equal temperature. Without such precautions, the entire building could crack.

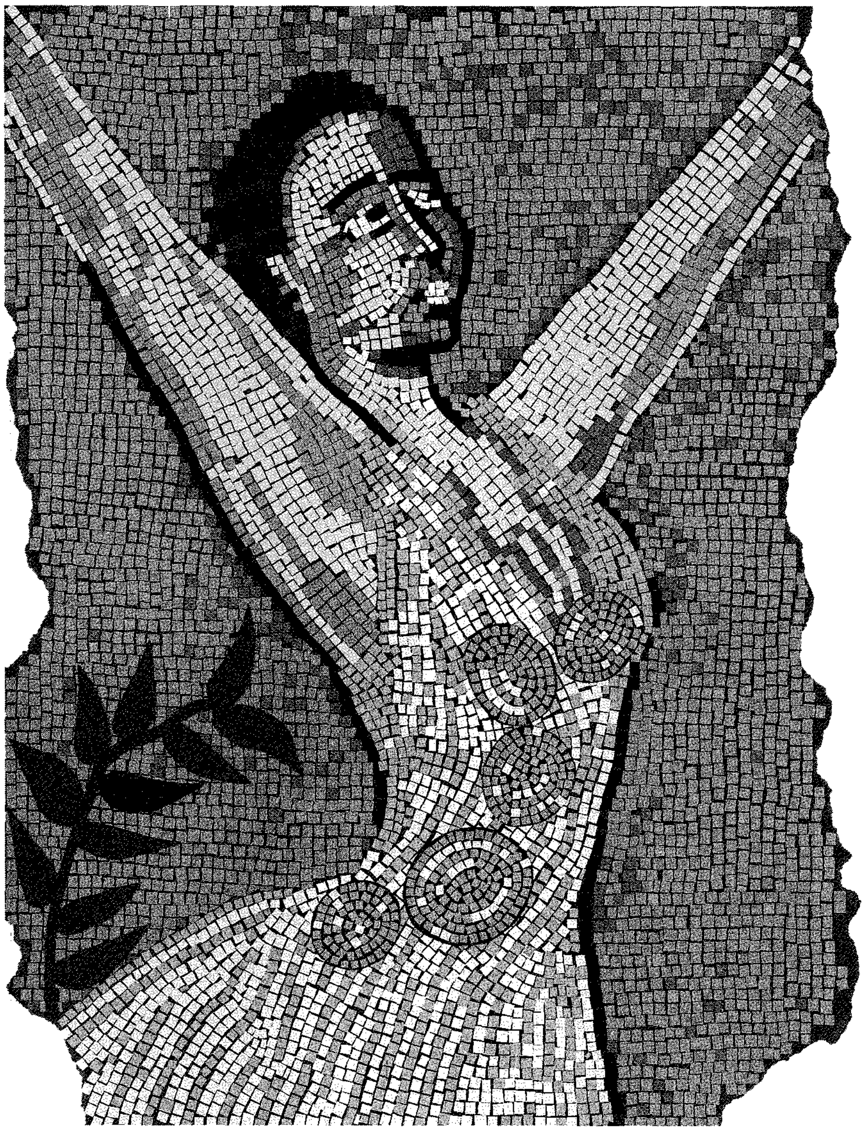
In "Delirious New York," Koolhaas wrote, "Manhattan has generated a shameless architecture that has been loved in direct proportion to its defiant lack of self-hatred, respected exactly to the degree that it went too far." Koolhaas clearly felt exhilarated to be going too far. He expressed confidence that the Chinese would not stand in the way of his vision for CCTV. "Maybe we can do something here the right way," he said later. Part of what had made Constructivist architecture so strong, he once told me, was that its creativity had been buttressed by a committed state, rather than weakened by a fickle, profit-minded client. "What can be created here, I think, is a building designed with the public good in mind," he said.

The music abruptly cut off—the ceremony was over. The crowd dispersed, and workers began dismantling the sets. Within twenty minutes, most of the audio equipment had been hauled away. As Koolhaas walked down the flowered path toward the guards, he looked back and smiled wistfully. "It was this Potemkin ceremony," he said. "It vanished as quickly as it came." ◆

GRECIAN FORMULA

Fashion's classical moment.

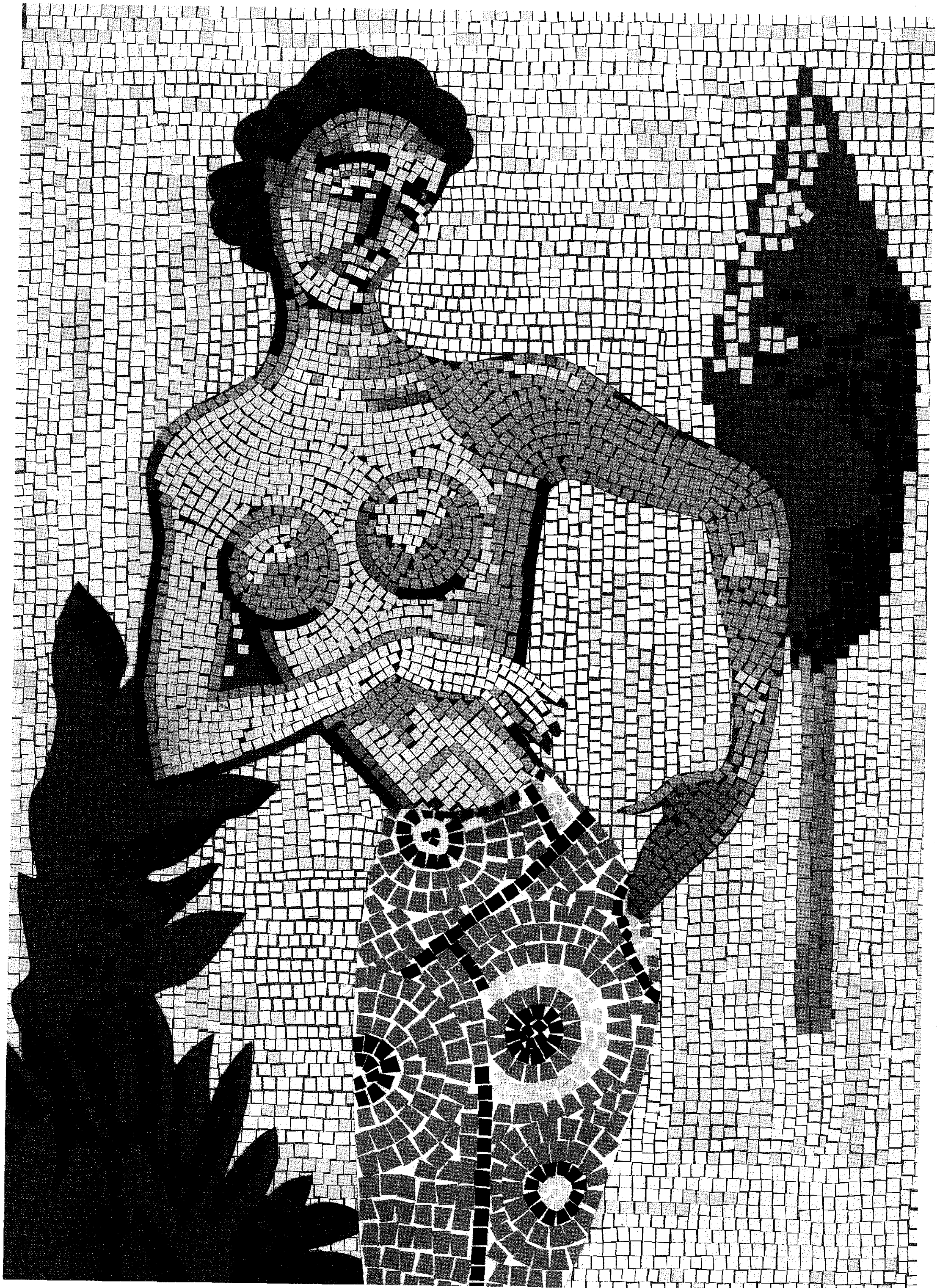
BY MICHAEL ROBERTS



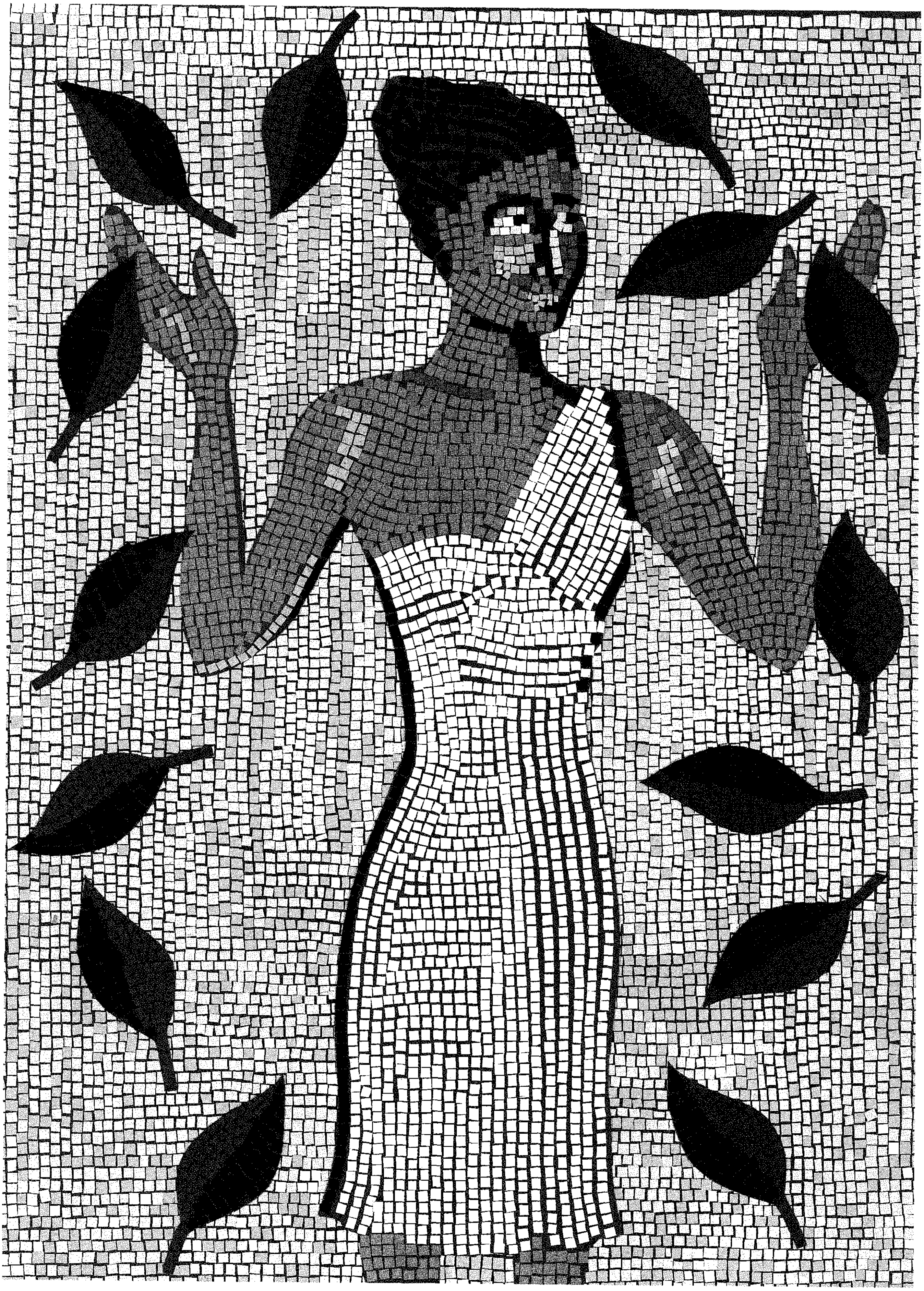
First, it was "Gladiator"; now it's Gaultier. Given the Sophoclean incestuousness of film's relationship to fashion, it is no surprise that Hollywood's recent obsession with all things Greco-Roman has suddenly popped up on the runway. The advent of what one mythologically astute fashion editor has called the "glamazon" look (pleats, toga-inspired draping, laced sandals) suggests that designers from Donna Karan to Miuccia Prada have been brushing up on the works of Russell Crowe—if not, perhaps, those of Cicero.

As they say, *Caveat emptor*. Those whose knowledge of Homer goes beyond the occasional glimpse of Brad Pitt's glutei maximi in "Troy" know that, in classical literature, clothes can be very bad news. In Euripides' "Medea," a gown sent as a wedding gift tears the flesh off the bride, while the matching headpiece spontaneously combusts, burning her to a crisp. (It's not the only garment in Greek literature that could double as a stove.) The diaphanous veil that Sophocles' Antigone wears at the beginning of the play comes in quite handy at the end—as a noose. Woollens? The quest for the Golden Fleece ended in murder, dismemberment, and fratricide. As for accessories, don't bother: as Oedipus and Hecuba both discovered, the razor-sharp golden dress pins, or *porpai*, that keep coming undone in Greek tragedies give new—or is it old?—meaning to the term "fashion victim."

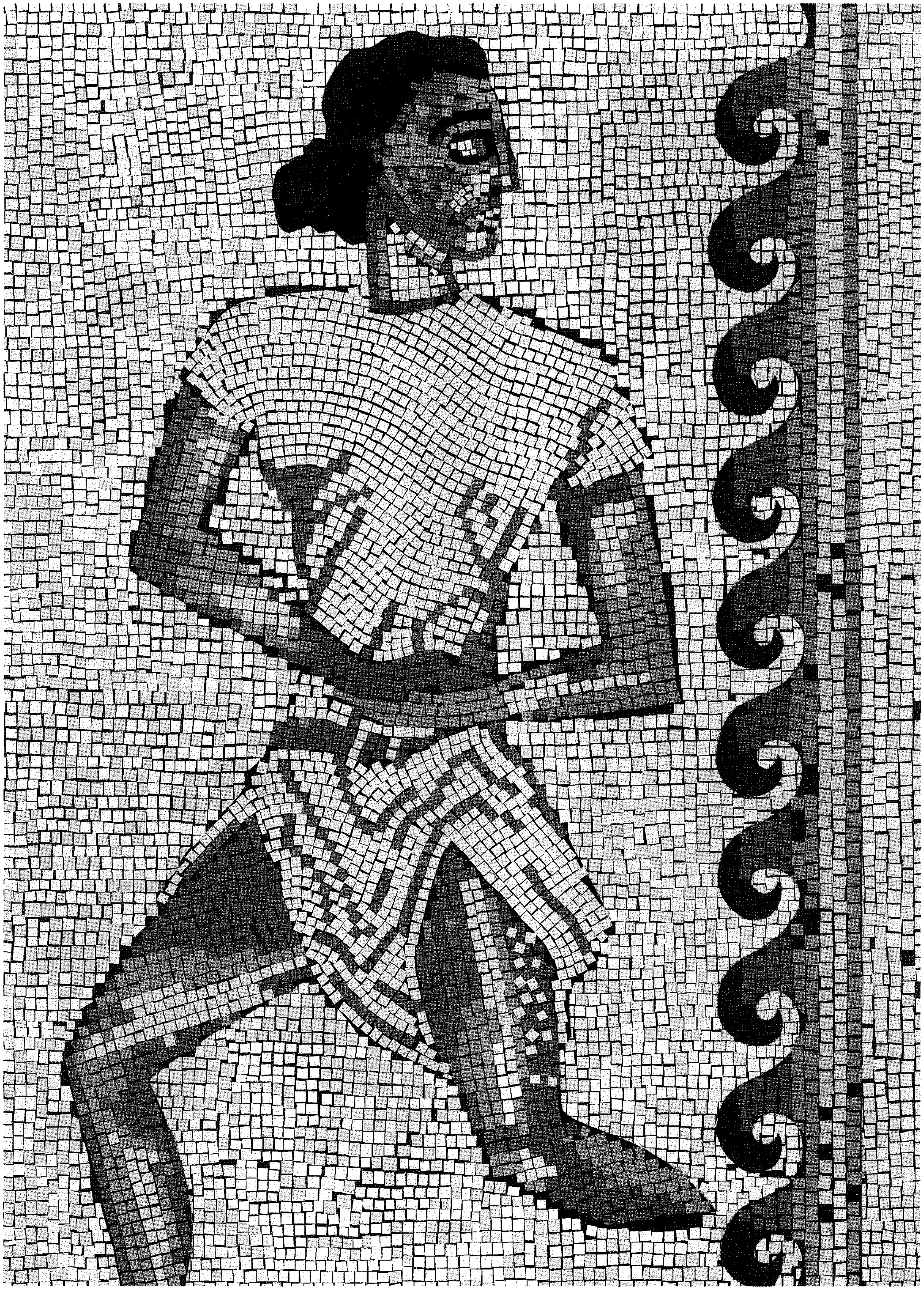
—*Daniel Mendelsohn*



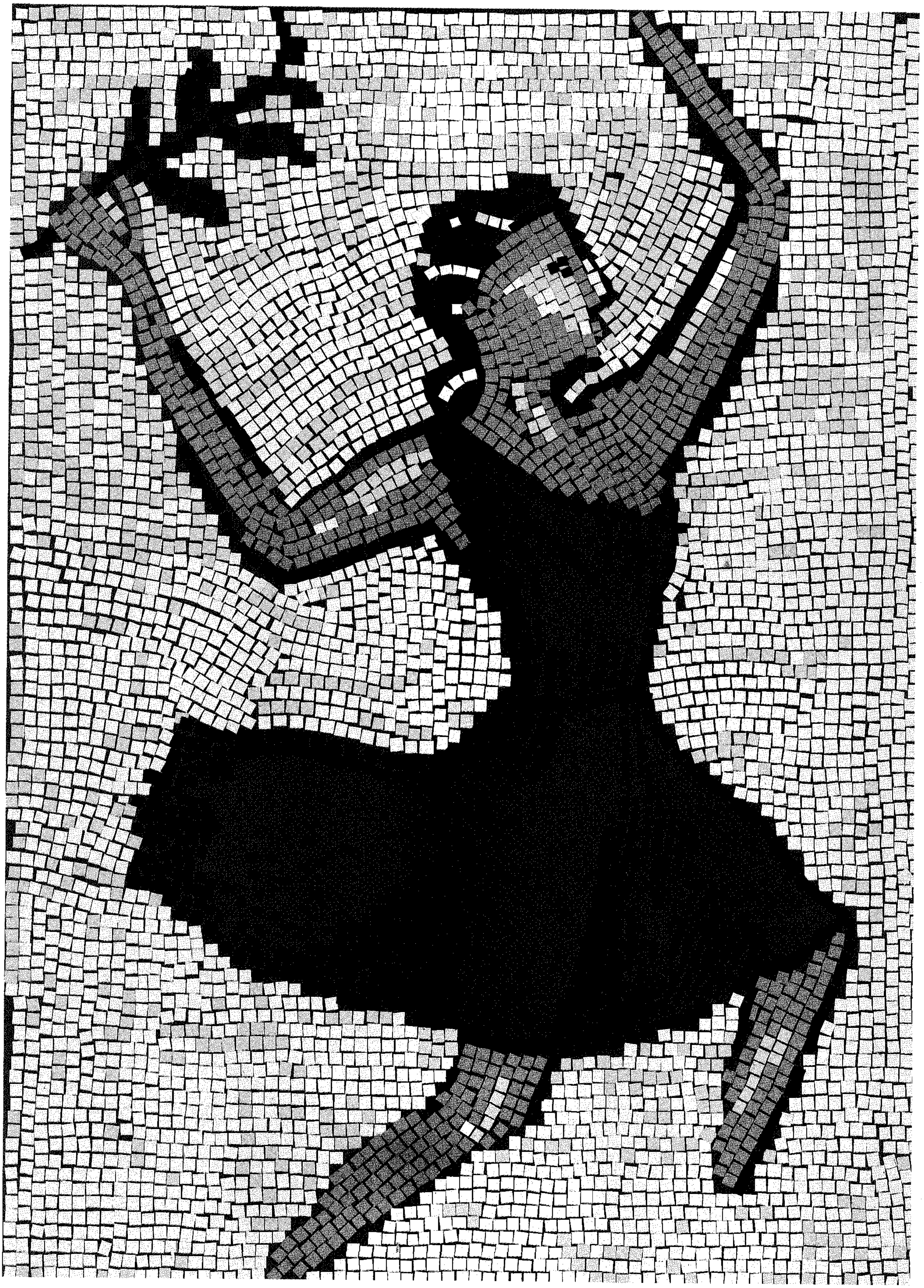
Opposite: Silk-jersey dress with knotted bodice by Sophia Kokosalaki. Above: Skirt with mosaic appliqués by Carolina Herrera.



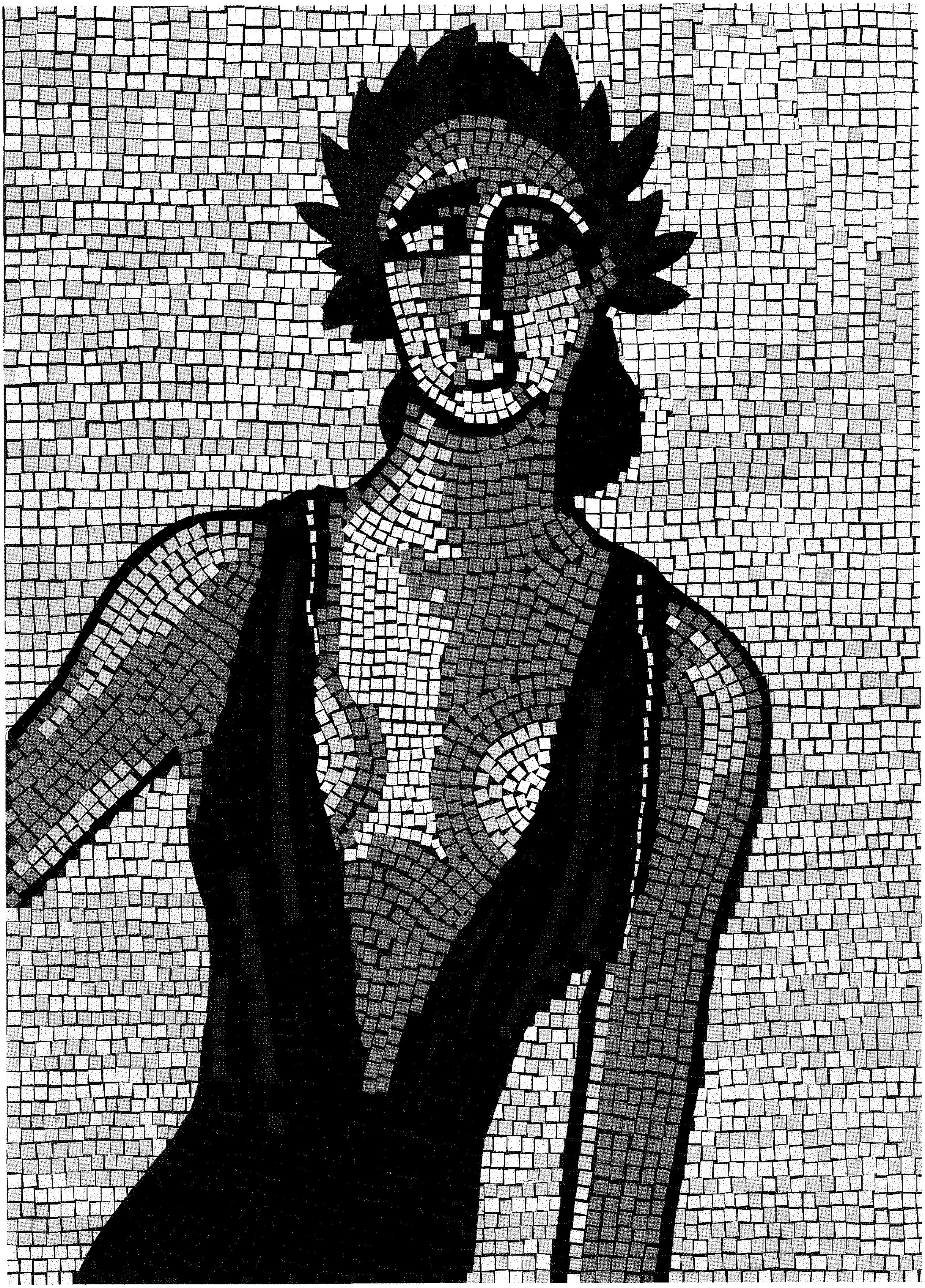
Hand-pleated one-shouldered sundress in unwashed garza cotton, with a draped, toga-inspired bodice, designed by Prada.



Lightweight silk T-shirt dress with short, center-wrapped culotte skirt, worn with a leather, gold-buckled belt, by MaxMara.

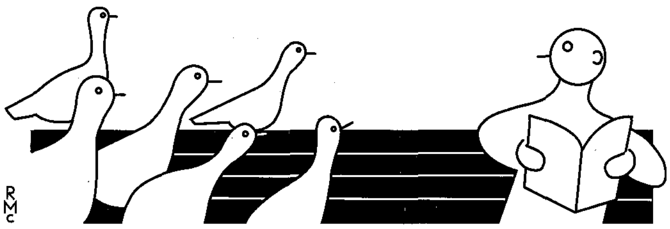


Draped and pleated asymmetrical silk-satin dress, with industrial rivets and a black grosgrain belt, by Alber Elbaz for Lanvin.



Evening dress of silk-jersey gauze and tulle, decorated with silver strands and a leather corset belt, by Karl Lagerfeld for Fendi.

THE CRITICS



BOOKS

SMASHED

The pulp poetry of Charles Bukowski.

BY ADAM KIRSCH

In the third edition of "The Norton Anthology of Modern and Contemporary Poetry," in which poets appear in order of birth, the class of 1920 fields a strong team, including Howard Nemerov and Amy Clampitt. If you were to browse the poetry section of any large bookstore, you would probably find a book or two by each of those critically esteemed, prize-winning poets. Nowhere to be found in the canonizing Norton anthology, however, is the man who occupies the most shelf space of any American poet: Charles Bukowski. Bukowski's books make up a burly phalanx, with their stark covers and long, lurid titles: "Love Is a Dog from Hell"; "Play the Piano Drunk Like a Percussion Instrument Until the Fingers Begin to Bleed a Bit." They give the impression of an aloof, possibly belligerent empire in the middle of the republic of letters.

Bukowski himself, and his many, many readers, would not have it any other way. John Martin, the founder of Black Sparrow Press, who was responsible for launching Bukowski's career, has explained that "he is not a mainstream author and he will never have a mainstream public." This is an odd thing to say about a poet who has sold millions of books and has been translated into more than a dozen languages—a commercial success of a kind hardly known in American poetry since the pre-modernist days of popular balladeers like Edgar A. Guest. Yet the sense of not being part of the mainstream, at least as the Norton anthology and most other authorities define it, is integral to Bukowski's appeal. He is one of those writers whom each new reader discovers with a transgressive thrill.

Fittingly, for a poet whose reputation was made in ephemeral underground journals, it is on the Internet that the Bukowski cult finds its most florid expression. There are hundreds of Web sites devoted to him, not just in America but in Germany, Spain, the Czech Republic, and Sweden, where one fan writes that, after reading him for the first time, "I felt there was a soul-mate in Mr. Bukowski." Such claims to intimacy are standard among Bukowski's admirers. On Amazon.com, the reader reviews of his books sound like a cross between love letters and revival-meeting testimonials: "This is the one that speaks to me to the point where each time I read certain pages, I cry"; "This book is one of the most influential books of poetry in my life"; or, most revealing of all, "I hate poetry, but I love Buk's poems."

Today's fans can no longer call up Bukowski on the phone or drop in on him at home in Los Angeles, where he lived most of his life. But before his death, from leukemia, in 1994, they could and did, with a regularity that the poet found flattering, if tiresome. As he told an interviewer in 1981, "I get many letters in the mail about my writing, and they say: 'Bukowski, you are so fucked up and you still survive. I decided not to kill myself.' . . . So in a way I save people. . . . Not that I want to save them: I have no desire to save anybody. . . . So these are my readers, you see? They buy my books—the defeated, the demented and the damned—and I am proud of it."

This mixture of boast and complaint exactly mirrors the coyness of Bukowski's poetry, which is at once misanthropic and comradely, aggressively vulgar and clandestinely sensitive. The readers who love him, and believe that he would love them in return, know how to look past the bluster of poems like "splashing":

> dumb,
> Jesus Christ,
> some people are so dumb
> you can hear them
> splashing around
> in their dumbness. . . .
>
> I want to
> run and hide
> I want to
> escape their engulfing
> nullity.

Bukowski's fans realize that "some people," like E. E. Cummings's "mostpeople," or J. D. Salinger's hated "phonies," are never us, always them—those not perceptive enough to understand our merit, or our favorite author's. This is a typically adolescent emotion, and it is no coincidence that all three of these writers exert a special power over teen-agers. With all three, too, there is the sense that if the misanthrope could know us as we really are he would welcome our pilgrimage; as Holden Caulfield says, "What really knocks me out is a book that, when you're all done reading it, you wish the author that wrote it was a terrific friend of yours and you could call him up on the phone whenever you felt like it." Similarly, Bukowski might declare his contempt for humanity, and his alarm at its constant invasions of his privacy—"I have never welcomed the ring of a / telephone," he writes in "the telephone"—yet he titles another poem with his telephone number, "462-0614," and issues what sounds like an open invitation:

> I don't write out of
> knowledge.
> when the phone rings
> I too would like to hear words
> that might ease
> some of this.
>
> that's why my number's
> listed.

This sort of cri de cœur is not what first comes to mind when the name Charles Bukowski is mentioned. In the course of some fifty books, he transformed himself into a mythic roughneck, a figure out of a tall tale—brawler, gambler, companion of bums and whores, boozehound with an oceanic thirst. (This legend gained still wider exposure with the 1987 movie "Barfly," in which a version of Bukowski is portrayed by Mickey Rourke.) In his heavily autobiographical novels and some of his poems, he gave this alter ego the transparent pseudonym Hank Chinaski—Bukowski's full name was Henry Charles Bukowski, Jr., and he was known to friends as Hank—but since he almost always wrote in the first person, the line between Chinaski the character and Bukowski the man is blurred. This blurring is, in fact, the secret of Bukowski's appeal: he combines the confessional poet's promise of intimacy with the larger-than-life aplomb of a pulp-fiction hero.

Bukowski's poems are best appreciated not as individual verbal artifacts but as ongoing installments in the tale of his true adventures, like a comic book or a movie serial. They are strongly narrative, drawing from an endless supply of anecdotes that typically involve a bar, a skid-row hotel, a horse race, a girlfriend, or any permutation thereof. Bukowski's free verse is really a series of declarative sentences broken up into a long, narrow column, the short lines giving an impression of speed and terseness even when the language is sentimental or clichéd. The effect is as though some legendary tough guy, a cross between Philip Marlowe and Paul Bunyan, were to take the barstool next to you, buy a round, and start telling his life story:

I was the mean and
crazy white
guy,
full of humor, laughter
and gamble.

I was shacked with a
silken-legged
beauty.
I drank and fought all
night,
was the terror of the
local bars.

These lines are from "then and now," a poem in the latest collection of Bukowski's work, "Slouching Toward Nirvana: New Poems" (Ecco; $27.50). Death has not put a dent in Bukowski's productivity; this is his ninth posthumous book of poems, and there are more to come. Nor has it changed his style: these "new poems" are just like the old poems, perhaps a shade more repetitive, but not immediately recognizable as second-rate work or leftovers.

An uncannily prolific afterlife was something that Bukowski counted on. As early as 1970, he wrote to his editor, "just think, someday after I'm dead

Bukowski's work promised to detour around fussy artistry and plunge straight into life itself. Photograph by Gerard Malanga.

"You wouldn't think there'd be much money in potatoes, chickens, and woodchopping, but it all adds up."

• •

and they start going for my poems and stories, you will have a hundred stories and a thousand poems on hand. you just don't know how lucky you are, babe." In the next quarter century, the surplus grew, thanks to Bukowski's nearly graphomaniacal fecundity. "I usually write ten or fifteen [poems] at once," he said, and he imagined the act of writing as a kind of entranced combat with the typewriter, as in his poem "cool black air": "now I sit down to it and I BANG IT, I don't use the light / touch, I BANG IT."

Alcohol was the fuel, as it was often the subject, of these poetic explosions: "I don't think I have written a poem when I was completely sober," he told one interviewer. And he rejected on principle the notion of poetry as a craft, a matter of labor and revision. Against the metaphors prevailing in the New Critical atmosphere of the nineteen-fifties, when he started writing in earnest—the Well Wrought Urns and the Verbal Icons—Bukowski posed his own, entirely characteristic image for writing: "it has to come out like hot turds the morning after a good beer drunk."

That kind of grossness is a large part of Bukowski's appeal. His own life, as it appears in the poems, at least, is a teenage boy's fantasy of adulthood, in which there's no one to make you clean up your room, or get out of bed in the morning, or stop drinking before you pass out. Yet, crucial to the myth, slobbery and drunkenness only increase Bukowski's appeal to women:

> you're a beast, she said
> your big white belly
> and those hairy feet.
> you never cut your nails. . . .
>
> beast beast beast,
> she kissed me,
> what do you want for
> breakfast?

Such poems offer the same kind of vicarious wish fulfillment that differently inclined readers might find in spy novels or gangster movies, with their parodies of unbound masculinity. (In one poem, Bukowski acknowledges this affinity, boasting: "don't believe the gossip: / Bogie's not dead.") And Bukowski is best read as a very skillful genre writer. He bears the same relation to poetry as Zane Grey does to fiction, or Ayn Rand to philosophy—a highly colored, morally uncomplicated cartoon of the real thing. He has two of the supreme merits of genre writing, consistency and abundance: once you have been enticed into Bukowski's world, you have the comfort of knowing that you won't have to leave it anytime soon, since there will always be another book to read.

The pleasures offered by Bukowski's work are more quickly exhausted than the questions raised by his life, and the way he transformed that life into something like art. The crucial episodes in his biography are reworked again and again in his poems and novels, so that any reader quickly learns the broad outlines of his story. In "Slouching Toward Nirvana," for instance, the poem "clothes cost money" recounts Bukowski's childhood memory of a classmate called Hofstetter, who would get beaten up on the way home from school every day, only to be berated by his mother: "YOU'VE RUINED YOUR CLOTHES / AGAIN! / DON'T YOU KNOW THAT CLOTHES / COST MONEY?" This is nearly identical to an episode from Bukowski's novel about his childhood, "Ham on Rye," where the hapless boy is called David: "*David!* Look at your knickers and shirt! . . . Why do you do this to your clothes?"

In both versions of the story, what

matters is the brutality of children and the cruel indifference of parents; and these seem to have been the major themes of Bukowski's own childhood. Born in Germany to an American-serviceman father and a German mother, Bukowski moved at the age of three to Los Angeles. The Depression, which shadowed his whole adolescence, affected him primarily through his father, who took out his frustrations on his wife and son. Bukowski describes terrible beatings, sadistically inflicted for minor transgressions like missing a blade of grass when he mowed the lawn. When Bukowski reached adolescence and broke out in a world-class case of acne, he saw it as a symptom of his helpless suffering: "The poisoned life had finally exploded out of me. There they were—all the withheld screams—spouting out in another form."

This disfigurement helped to make Bukowski a surly, friendless teen-ager. But there was another element in his isolation, one that he dwells on much less often—an innate sensitivity and intelligence, which led to the first stirrings of literary ambition. This is a standard element in the biography of most poets, but it fits awkwardly with the myth of Bukowski the tough, who constantly proclaims his contempt for mere bookishness. "Shakespeare didn't work at all for me," he told one interviewer. "That upper-crust shit bored me. I couldn't relate to it." The promise of his books is that they detour around emasculated, fussy artistry—"We're all tired of the turned subtle phrase and the riddle in the middle of the line," he declared to another interviewer—and plunge deep into life itself.

Yet Bukowski also admitted, on other occasions, to having been a very bookish youth: "Between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four I must have read a whole library." In his letters (four volumes of which have been published so far), he shows that he is conversant with the entire range of modern fiction and poetry. He parodies Eliot ("Bukowski's old, Bukowski's old / he wears the bottoms of his beercans / rolled"), drops references to Mann (in "Slouching Toward Nirvana," there is a poem titled "disorder and early sorrow"), debates the relative merits of Turgenev and Tolstoy (he prefers the former). Most surprisingly, he admires the New Critics, whose aesthetics of complexity and impersonality he so gleefully violated. "I know that the *Kenyon Review* is supposed to be our enemy," he wrote to a friend in 1961, "but the articles are, in most cases, sound, and I would almost say, poetic and vibrant."

In fact, Bukowski started out in eager pursuit of conventional literary success. He attended Los Angeles City College, where he took a creative-writing class, and wrote furiously, as he wryly recalls in "the burning of the dream":

> and I wrote from 3 to
> 5 short stories a week
> and they all came
> back
> from *The New Yorker*, *Harper's*,
> *The Atlantic Monthly*.

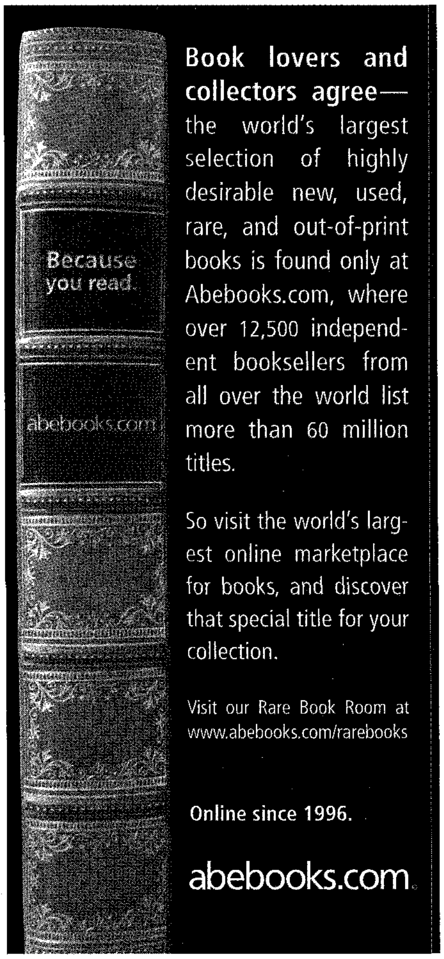
In his poverty and dedication, and, especially, in his low-rent Los Angeles milieu, the young Bukowski strongly resembles Arturo Bandini, the hero of John Fante's minor classic "Ask the Dust"; the book, which Bukowski accidentally discovered in the stacks of the Los Angeles Central Library, made a huge impression on him. (Decades later, when Bukowski was famous and Fante forgotten, his advocacy led Black Sparrow Press to bring Fante's work back into print.) During the war, when he was classified 4-F for psychological reasons, Bukowski travelled around the country on almost no money, working menial jobs and staying in flophouses—but always writing. He even scored a considerable success in 1946, when he was published in the literary magazine *Portfolio*, alongside Henry Miller and Jean-Paul Sartre.

Yet after that, so the legend goes, Bukowski gave up writing completely, and became a full-time drunk. For the next decade, he bummed his way across America, eventually washing up in Los Angeles once again; he boozed, whored, fought, spent time on factory floors and in jails. He frequently recalled one Philadelphia bar, in particular, where he would sit from 5 A.M. to 2 A.M., earning free drinks by allowing the bartender to beat him up for the entertainment of the crowd. This low-life odyssey is to Bukowski's poetry what Melville's South Sea journeys were to his fiction: an inexhaustible store of adventure and anecdote, and a badge of authenticity.

After being hospitalized, in 1955, with a nearly fatal illness, Bukowski returned to writing, but in a new spirit. His focus was now on poetry, instead of short stories, and he sent his work to underground journals with names like *Coffin*, *Grist*, and *Ole*. These, and not the glossy weeklies, were the right venues for his new work, which boasted a proletarian grittiness: "After losing a week's pay in four hours it is very difficult to come to your room and face the typewriter and fabricate a lot of lacy bullshit."

Once Bukowski returned to his vocation, success arrived slowly but surely. He became well known among readers of little magazines, and published a series of chapbooks and limited editions. Yet, as his reputation grew, he was still stuck working as a postal clerk, a job whose indignities he detailed in his first novel, "Post Office." The real breakthrough in his career as a writer came in 1970, when John Martin agreed to pay him a monthly stipend of a hundred dollars in return for the right to publish his work through Black Sparrow Press. This arrangement was a gamble for both publisher and author, but it proved tremendously successful: by the time Bukowski died, his monthly payment had risen to seven thousand dollars and he had nineteen titles in print.

The deal can also be seen, however, as a sign of Bukowski's lack of literary confidence. Instead of offering his publisher each book as he finished it, Bukowski simply sent all his work to Martin, who then selected the contents of the new volume. "He didn't even know what I was going to put in," Martin is quoted as saying in the 1998 biography "Charles Bukowski: Locked in the Arms of a Crazy Life," by Howard Sounes. "He didn't care." It sounds less like modern publishing, with authors and editors and agents all defending their own interests, than like the quasi-feudal relationship that John Clare, the archetypal nineteenth-century "peasant poet," had with his publishers. Clare, too,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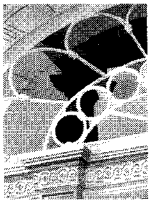
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sent off all his writing to his editor—John Taylor, of Taylor & Hessey—and received a regular allowance in return, a sign of the parties' profound imbalance in social status and worldly savvy. But, while Clare and Taylor eventually had the bitter falling-out one might expect from such an arrangement, Bukowski and Martin remained close, trusting partners to the end. Black Sparrow continued to publish Bukowski until Martin retired, in 2002; the Bukowski catalogue was then sold to Ecco, itself a formerly independent house that is now part of HarperCollins. (The ironic result is that Bukowski, the ultimate underground poet, is now published by Rupert Murdoch.)

It is not just in his business dealings that Bukowski gives the impression of insecurity—of feeling, as he once wrote to a friend, not "so much like a writer as . . . like somebody who has slipped one past." The same sense emerges, more damagingly, in his defensive scorn for complexity and difficulty, as if these literary values were a trick played by effete professors on honest, hardworking readers. "What's easy is good and what's hard is a pain in the ass," Bukowski declared to one correspondent; or, again, "Somebody once asked me what my theory of life was and I said, 'Don't try.' That fits the writing too. I don't try, I just type."

Just typing allowed Bukowski to accomplish a great deal. He became wealthy and famous, a friend of celebrities like Sean Penn and Madonna, the subject of biographies and documentaries. In his late poems, his delight in driving a BMW and hobnobbing with Norman Mailer is so genuine that it becomes infectious. His escape from poverty and menial labor, solely through the passion and popularity of his writing, is like a fairy tale. "I laid down my guts," as he put it, "and the gods finally answered." In a literary sense, too, Bukowski accomplished something rare: he produced a large, completely distinctive, widely beloved body of work, something that few poets today even dream of. It is a testament to Bukowski's genuine popularity that, at a time when most poetry books can't be given away, his are perennially ranked among the most frequently stolen titles in bookstores.

Yet Bukowski and his work also have the pathos of missed possibilities. He occasionally took pains to align himself with a coherent literary tradition, writing about his admiration for Dostoyevsky, Hamsun, Céline, and Camus—the classics of modern alienation, the biographers of the underground man. He was especially fond of Hamsun's "Hunger," the story of a young writer demented by poverty and ambition. And Bukowski came much closer to this experience than almost any other American poet. There is every reason to believe that "a note upon starvation," a poem in the new collection, was written from experience:

> about the fourth day
> you begin to feel almost intoxicated
> panic subsides
> one sleeps well:
> 12 to 14 hours,
> and most unusual
> one continues to defecate.
> the vision grows more acute
> everything is seen with a new clarity.

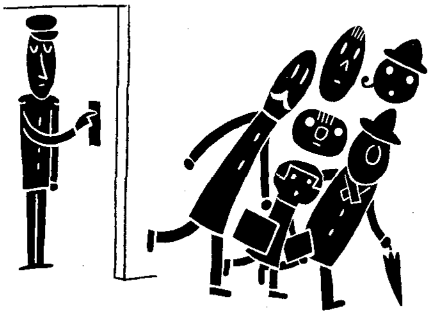
Yet the contrast with Hamsun reveals just how conventional a writer Bukowski remained. There is nothing in his work even remotely like the episode in "Hunger" where the starving hero, having encountered an old man on a park bench, starts to make up fantastic lies about his landlord: that his name is J. A. Happolati, that he has invented an electric prayer book, that he was once the Prime Minister of Persia. The old man patiently accepts all of these outrageous stories, and even asks polite questions about them, sending the narrator into a rage: " 'Goddamnit, man, I suppose you think I've been sitting here stuffing you full of lies?' I shouted, completely out of my mind. 'I'll bet you never believed there was a man with the name Happolati. . . . The way you have treated me is something I am not used to, I will tell you flatly, and I won't take it, so help me God!' "

The comic fury of this episode does seem to take us to the edge of insanity: Hamsun, like Dostoyevsky, shows that the most frightening symptom of madness is the immolation of self-esteem, the urge to humiliate oneself at the same time as one humiliates everyone else. And this is the risk that Bukowski never takes. Even at his most unheroic, he is the hero of his stories and poems, always demanding the reader's covert approval. That is why he is so easy to love, especially for novice readers with little experience of the genuine challenges of poetry; and why, for more demanding readers, he remains so hard to admire. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Prince of Fire, *by Daniel Silva (Putnam; $25.95).* Silva's fourth novel, "The Kill Artist," introduced Gabriel Allon, an Israeli secret agent and the unlikely guardian of Yasir Arafat during the Oslo peace negotiations. In the three books that followed, Arafat demonstrated his appreciation by repeatedly trying to have Allon murdered. In the latest installment, the Israeli Embassy in Rome is destroyed by a Palestinian bomb, and Allon is summoned from Venice, where he poses as a world-class art restorer, to hunt down the terrorist. That the bomber also happens to moonlight as a famous French archeologist is mere coincidence. How these two could operate undetected in such gossipy professions is itself a mystery, but Silva manages to render the rest of the tense cat-and-mouse plot more credibly. Though he doesn't disguise his (now, perhaps, obsolete) antipathy for Arafat, Silva adorns his other characters—the true believer, the spymaster, the lover—with enough fine thoughts to make them sympathetic.

Natural Novel, *by Georgi Gospodinov, translated from the Bulgarian by Zornitsa Hristova (Dalkey Archive; $12.50).* Gospodinov's anarchic, experimental début concerns a young writer, the narrator, whose marriage breaks up after his wife becomes pregnant by someone else. But this plot is little more than the framework for a lively assortment of fragments—dreams, lists, projected attempts to write a novel entirely with verbs or a Bible for flies, and a chapter called "Towards a Natural History of the Toilet." Inevitably, a book that takes such risks occasionally falls on its face; some of Gospodinov's scatology feels self-conscious, and pop-culture references, presumably intended to seem wised-up and Western, come off as just the reverse. But the hits outnumber the misses, and there is something engaging about the novel's stubborn refusal to amount to anything. As the narrator announces, "My immodest desire is to mold a novel of beginnings, a novel that keeps starting, promising something, reaching page 17 and then starting again."



Chatter, *by Patrick Radden Keefe (Random House; $24.95).* "Secrecy is a maverick element," Keefe writes, in this critical analysis of American intelligence-gathering. His book examines the history of America's spy programs and those of its allies and—using little investigation and no classified sources—unveils much of the inner workings of the National Security Agency (a hundred satellites, thirty thousand eavesdroppers, a six-billion-dollar budget). Keefe also worries about the self-defeating effects of keeping so much from the public: secrecy might be essential to the success of spy missions, but it can also conceal privacy violations, abuses of power, and, perhaps worst of all, operational failure. Keefe writes with frustration that, facing allegations of malfeasance or incompetence, the N.S.A. or the C.I.A. will simply stonewall. "Trust us," the agency will say. "We can't tell you why you should trust us. But trust us."

Do You Hear What I Hear, *by Minna Proctor (Viking; $25.95).* Proctor's parents—a nonobservant Catholic father and a nonpracticing Jewish mother who divorced when she was in her teens—reared her without religion. So it is a surprise when her father tells her that he is applying to become an Episcopal priest. Her quest to come to terms first with her father's calling, and then with the rejection of his candidacy, leads to a multifaceted consideration of the ordination process, church history, and comparative theology, and also to stringent self-examination. Cosmopolitan and secular, Proctor discovers a wistful envy of her father's faith and a touching indignation when his proffered service is turned down: "I don't think I believe in a God who sends psychic messages through bureaucratic processes."

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BOOKS

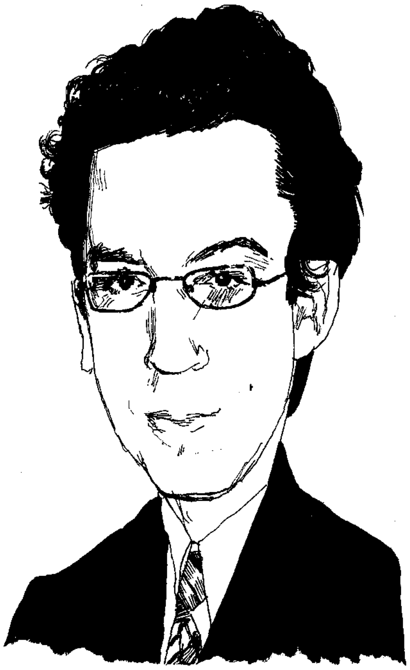
MIXED MESSAGES

"Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close."

BY JOHN UPDIKE

Jonathan Safran Foer, born in 1977, came out swinging in 2002, with the publication of his astounding, clownish, tender, intricately and extravagantly plotted novel "Everything Is Illuminated." From the hilarious overreacher's English of the Ukrainian tour guide Alexander Perchov to the passionately fanciful evocations of a Polish-Jewish shtetl from 1791 to 1942, the prose kept jolting the reader into the heightened awareness that comes with writing whose exact like hasn't been seen before. Foer's second novel, "Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close" (Houghton Mifflin; $24.95), continues on a high plane of inventiveness and emotional urgency, while taking place on the solid turf of New York City in the aftermath of that most familiar of recent catastrophes, the 2001 World Trade Center blitz.

The hero, a nine-year-old boy called Oskar Schell, has lost his father, Thomas, in the collapse of one of the Twin Towers. Further, he is the only person to have heard the five decreasingly sanguine messages that Thomas, trapped in a meeting at Windows on the World, left on the family answering machine. A year later, he has many symptoms: insomnia, fear of elevators and Arabs, a sense of being "in the middle of a huge black ocean." This reader's heart slightly sank when he realized that he was going to spend more than three hundred pages in the company of an unhappy, partially wised-up nine-year-old. The novel, traditionally a mirror held up to the Western bourgeoisie, to teach its members how to shave, dress, and behave, has focussed on adult moral choices and their consequences. With some brilliant exceptions like Dickens and Mark Twain and Henry James, novelists have not taken children seriously enough to make them protagonists. However sensitive and observant, the ordinary child lacks property and the capacity for sexual engagement; he exists, therefore, on the margins of the social contract—a rider, as it were, on the imperatives and compromises of others. Yet in recent years a number of young novelists—Stephen Millhauser and Jonathan Lethem, for two—have devoted their most ambitious and energetic efforts to detailing the fervent hobbies and the intoxicating overdoses on popular culture, the estrangement and the dependence that characterize contemporary American childhood. Childhood's new viability as novelistic ground may signal a shift in the very nature of being a human being, considered anthropologically as a recipient and continuer of tribal myths, beliefs, and strictures. Older novelists up through Joyce, Proust, and Hemingway portrayed the pained shedding of this traditional baggage; the newer novelists, having inherited almost no set beliefs from their liberal, distracted middle-class parents, see childhood as the place where one invents the baggage—totems, rituals, lessons to live by—of a solitary one-person tribe.



Jonathan Safran Foer

ANDY FRIEDMAN

Foer's protagonist, a nine-year-old atheist whose immediate family consists of a dog called Buckminster, an unusually permissive and remote working mother, a loving grandmother who lives across the street and talks to him through a baby monitor, and a grandfather whom the trauma of the Dresden firebombing has robbed of the gift of speech, has few acculturated antibodies to heal the wound of his father's abrupt death. While the twenty-year-old hero of "Everything Is Illuminated" has distinctly Jewish ancestors, full of folkloric shtetl vitality, as a cornerstone of his self, little Oskar has only a tambourine, a scrapbook titled "Stuff That Happened to Me," and a psychiatrist who thinks he should be hospitalized, lest in his unassuaged grief and shock he harm himself. His family seems oddly deracinated; his paternal grandparents spoke German, but they are not Jewish, since they were moving about freely in Dresden at the time of the Allied incendiary raid of February, 1945, and, indeed, his grandmother's family was hiding a Jew. Nor do they give any evidence of being Christian, though Grandma is said to believe in God. Oskar's mother is a busy lawyer, and his father reluctantly ran a jewelry business founded by his speechless father, who wanted to be a sculptor, but the Schells basically exist in the same West Side economic zone as J. D. Salinger's Glass family: there is enough money to support their wordy absorption in one another and their wounded pasts.

The grandparents, who met in a Broadway bakery, impulsively marry as a mutual rescue. Actually, they had met before, as young people in Dresden, Grandma being the younger sister of a girl the grandfather had loved, impregnated, and lost in Dresden's firebombing. The couple create a minimally connubial marriage of silence and strictly observed zones of Nothing and Something in their apartment. The grandfather flees back to Dresden in 1963, when he learns that his wife—breaking one of their rules—has become pregnant, and she leaves New York forty years later. From their places of retreat they shower letters upon those cruelly left behind—Grandma upon Oskar, and the elder Thomas Schell hundreds of letters, which he doesn't send, upon his son, whom he never sees, and who died in his prime on September 11, 2001.

Each letter writer possesses an eccentric style, recognizable at a glance. Grandma's letters have short, flush-left paragraphs and extra spaces between sentences. The senior Thomas Schell writes in one big paragraph when he is not, as a means of carrying on a conversation, writing single sentences. These responses are published one on a page, making for a real page-turner of a novel, a kind of serial fortune cookie:

> I'm sorry, this is the smallest I've got
> Start spreading the news . . .
> The regular, please
> Thank you, but I'm about to burst
> I'm not sure, but it's late
> Help
> Ha ha ha!
> Please marry me

The junior Thomas Schell, among the habits and skills intensely endearing to his son, always read with a red pen in hand, circling mistakes. He makes his mark on the pages of Foer's novel in the form of many red (truly red; this is a novel in full color) encirclings in the text of one letter that, in April of 1978, happened, apparently, to reach him. The picto-/typographical antics don't end there; the text is interrupted by photographs, of stars and jewels and keys and Manhattan windows and fingerprints and the backs of heads and an elephant's eye and turtles mating and Stephen Hawking appearing on television and Sir Laurence Olivier playing Hamlet and, lifted from a Portuguese site on the Internet, a blurred body falling from one of the World Trade Center towers. Oskar thinks it could be his father; all the photographs show things on his mind. Again, the longest of the grandfather's letters, in illustration of his sensation that "there won't be enough pages in this book for me to tell you what I need to tell you," exploits the possibilities of computerized typesetting by slowly squeezing, page by page, the lines and the words within the lines until the pages become illegible and, finally, almost as solidly black as an Ad Reinhardt canvas. Earlier in this remarkable missive, Thomas tells of tapping out words by means of a telephone keypad, and gives us two and a half pages of numerals that an ideal reader (not me) could decipher. There are also three blank pages in the middle of the book, illustrating a mishap whereby Grandma settled at a typewriter to write the story of her life and did so to the tune of a thousand pages only to learn that there had been no ribbon in the machine. How come she didn't notice? Her eyes, she is always saying, "are crummy." Even as a magic-realist parable of non-communication, her blind persistence boggles the mind.

This reader's mind was boggled, too, by a nine-year-old boy's being allowed to roam, every weekend, all over the five boroughs, inquiring, in alphabetical order, at the two hundred and sixteen different addresses listed in the phone book under the name "Black," which was written on an envelope containing a key that Oskar found in a blue vase on a high shelf of his father's closet. He goes on foot at first, continually shaking his tambourine, "because it helped me remember that even though I was going through different neighborhoods, I was still me." This heroic exercise is his way of drawing near to his dead father; he draws near to his live mother by zipping up the back of her dress as she prepares to go out.

In the apartment above them, it happens, there is a hundred-and-three-year-old man called Black—Mr. Black, to be exact. Though he hasn't left his apartment for twenty-four years, he agrees to accompany Oskar on his search. Foer has a flair for the list, the inventive inventory, and his ramble through the Blacks has its vivid moments: Abby Black lives in the narrowest house in New York, formerly occupied by Edna St. Vincent Millay, and is an epidemiologist; she chats with Oskar about elephants' memories and tears while an unseen man shouts for her attention in the next room; Abe Black lives in Coney Island and takes Oskar for a ride on the Cyclone; Ada Black owns two Picassos, has an African-American maid called Gail, and seems to know suspiciously much about Oskar; Fo Black, in Chinatown, displays "I ♥ NY" posters everywhere, because *ny* means "you" in Chinese; Georgia Black, in Staten Island, has established a museum of her husband's life in her living room, and he has created one to her in the next room. I don't doubt that Foer is resourceful enough to take us all the way through the alphabet with amiable freaks, but was grateful that he didn't; playful inventiveness can come down with a case of the cutes. After a while, Foer allows us to forget Oskar's tam-

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bourine, and his use of the expression "zipping up the sleeping bag of myself" for emotional withdrawal and "wearing heavy boots" for depression. As for Oskar's inventions—a teakettle whose spout becomes a mouth that "could whistle pretty melodies, or do Shakespeare"; little microphones that, once swallowed, would play our interior sounds for all to hear; a biodegradable car; safety nets everywhere—they measure, I suppose, his desire to improve an implacable world, and serve to placate a child's seething impotence.

The book's graphic embellishments reach a climax in the last pages, when the flip-the-pages device present in some children's books answers Oskar's yearning that everything be run backward—a fall is turned into an ascent. It is one of the most curious happy endings ever contrived, and unexpectedly moving. But, over all, the book's hyperactive visual surface covers up a certain hollow monotony in its verbal drama. An anomie and disaffection afflicts the Schells which no description of the Dresden firebombing or Hiroshima (it's in here, too, for good measure) can quite excuse. There is a disproportion not felt with the Nazi atrocities that haunt the grandfathers in "Everything Is Illuminated." As a result, the later novel, on its local ground, seems thinner, overextended, and sentimentally watery, compared with its Old World predecessor. Grandfather Schell's abandoning his newly pregnant wife never feels explained; it is just chewed over. Grandma recounts his departure to Oskar:

> Why are you leaving me?
> He wrote, I do not know how to live.
> I do not know either, but I am trying.
> I do not know how to try.

To explain her own narrow and static life, she proposes, "That's been my problem. I miss what I already have, and I surround myself with things that are missing." The voices of both grandparents protest too much, crying "I love you, I love you!" while receding. It's as if the author wants to give his characters his own warm heart, but the transplant doesn't take. "I love you so much it hurts me," Grandma writes Oskar. In this family, everybody keeps saying, "I'm sorry," but nobody acts sorry.

Oskar's mother, it turns out, is watching over him more closely than it appears, but the child has to deduce this on his own. His prose style, interestingly, is to run dialogue together in paragraphs, except, sometimes, when he and his mother talk; then he runs their laconic exchanges down the page as thin as the mouse's tail in that pioneering study of childhood "Alice in Wonderland." In similar minimalist, straggling fashion, Grandma's last letter expresses what seems to be the novel's preachment, Oskar's lesson to live by. She remembers sleeping as a girl next to her sister, her husband's true love:

> The hairs of our arms touched.
> It was late, and we were tired.
> We assumed there would be other nights . . .
> I said, I want to tell you something.
> She said, You can tell me tomorrow.
> I had never told her how much I loved her . . .
> I thought about waking her.
> But it was unnecessary.
> There would be other nights.
> And how can you say I love you to someone you love?
> I rolled onto my side and fell asleep next to her.
> Here is the point of everything I have been trying to tell you, Oskar.
> It's always necessary.

This is magnificent in its quiet way, but possibly assigns too much importance to verbalization, as children do. People know more than they are told. They know when they are loved, and did even in eras when "love" was not the all-purpose catchword it has become. As no less aloof an eminence than T. S. Eliot wrote:

> There's no vocabulary
> For love within a family, love that's lived in
> But not looked at, love within the light of which
> All else is seen, the love within which
> All other love finds speech.
> This love is silent.

We must trust our parents, our children to hear us even in silence, in an age that fears silence, when Muzak, TV, and their computerized counterparts fill the few crannies left by traffic noise. Foer is, I would say, a naturally noisy writer—a natural parodist, a jokester, full of ideas and special effects, keen to keep us off balance and entertained. The novel's very title, "Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close," suggests the kind of impact he wants to make on the reader. But a little more silence, a few fewer messages, less graphic apparatus might let Foer's excellent empathy, imagination, and good will resonate all the louder. ♦

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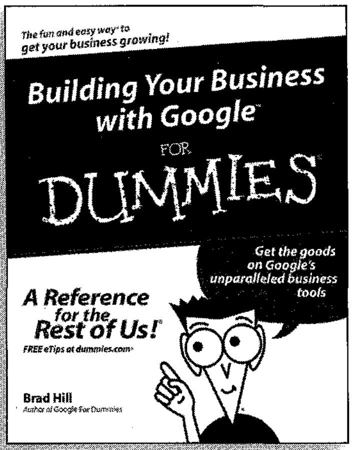
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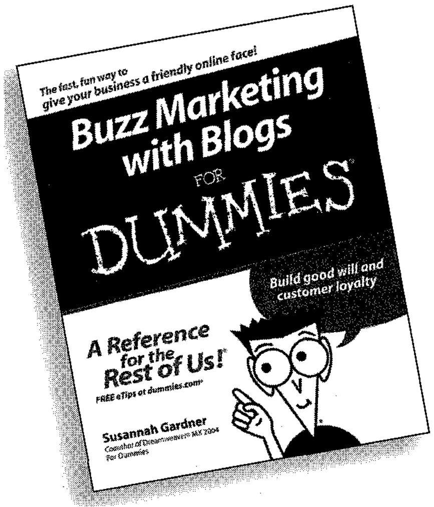
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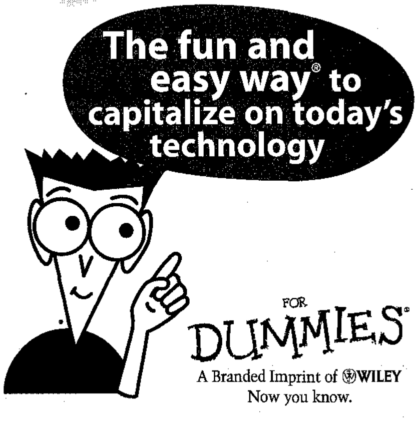
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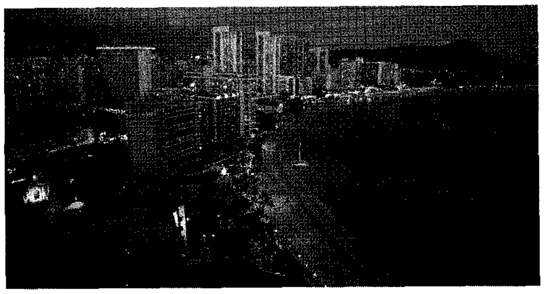

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Wildly Urbane

By Richard J. Pietschmann

Outside the breezy, cosmopolitan city of Honolulu and its nearby resort haven of Waikīkī, there's a madly scenic Hawaiian island. With two imposing mountain ranges and a hundred and twelve miles of coastline, O'ahu has more untamed space than one might expect. But alongside its paradisiacal wilderness, Honolulu bursts with cultural and culinary stimulation. It's this utopian blend of traditional *'aina* (land and earth) and modern-city sophistication that makes O'ahu an ideal getaway.

Drive the island's spectacular Windward eastern coast up to the North Shore on a two-lane beach road. Its relaxed and romantic spirit is why locals call it "the country." Dig your toes into Sunset Beach's famed white sand. A slice of chocolate *haupia* (coconut and arrowroot custard pie) at **Ted's Bakery** (808-638-5974) fuels the drive onward. Check out 'Ehukai Beach Park for a look at famed surf break the Banzai Pipeline—though in the summer it's likely to be a mild ripple. Stop in at Haleiwa, the so-called Surf Capital of the World. Schedule surf lessons, scuba dives, or kayaking adventures with **Surf & Sea** (800-899-SURF).

Couples with an appetite for outdoor adventure should consider the view from a two-passenger glider at **Original Glider Rides** (808-677-3404). As the glider soars over the island's North Shore, the ragged, remote Wai'anae Mountains provide a dramatic backdrop. Or hike towards Kaena Point and witness O'ahu's pristine North Shore coastline. Keep an eye out for whales and spinner dolphins.

Urban adventurers can get a sense of O'ahu's historical and cultural attributes at Honolulu's **Bishop Museum** (808-847-3511), home of the greatest collection of Hawaiian and Pacific artifacts in the world. At **I'olani Palace** (808-522-0832), the only royal palace in the U.S., visit the Gallery and see the crown jewels. At **The Hawaii State Art Museum** (808-586-0900), the art blends the traditional and modern; the collection showing all that makes the island unique.

On the last Friday of each month artists and young professionals gather at the historic, rambling art museum, the **Honolulu Academy of Arts** (808-532-8700) to appreciate art, eat, and dance to the latest sounds from the hottest DJs during **ARTafterDARK.** On first Fridays of the month, be sure to visit Honolulu's lively **Nuuanu Street,** when its many art galleries welcome artists and art lovers with pupu and wine. The area is also opened to pedestrians and entertainment is provided. Get a reservation for Glenn Chu's marvelous **Indigo** restaurant (808-521-2900). Specializing in Eurasian cuisine, its hip Opium Den and Green Room buzz with nightlife.

Between downtown and Waikīkī, busy King Street has blossomed into a dinner destination because of **Alan Wong's Restaurant** (808-949-2526) and **Chef Mavro** (808-944-4714). Both restaurants deliciously reflect a deep respect for Hawaiian ingredients, Asian accents, and solid technique. Later in the evening, enjoy a sunset mai tai in the Waikīkī open air at the Halekulani hotel's **House Without A Key** (808-923-2311). Listen to hula, relax by the shore, and contemplate that paradise does in fact exist.

For more information on planning your trip to the island of O'ahu, log on to visit-oahu.com or call 877-525-OAHU.

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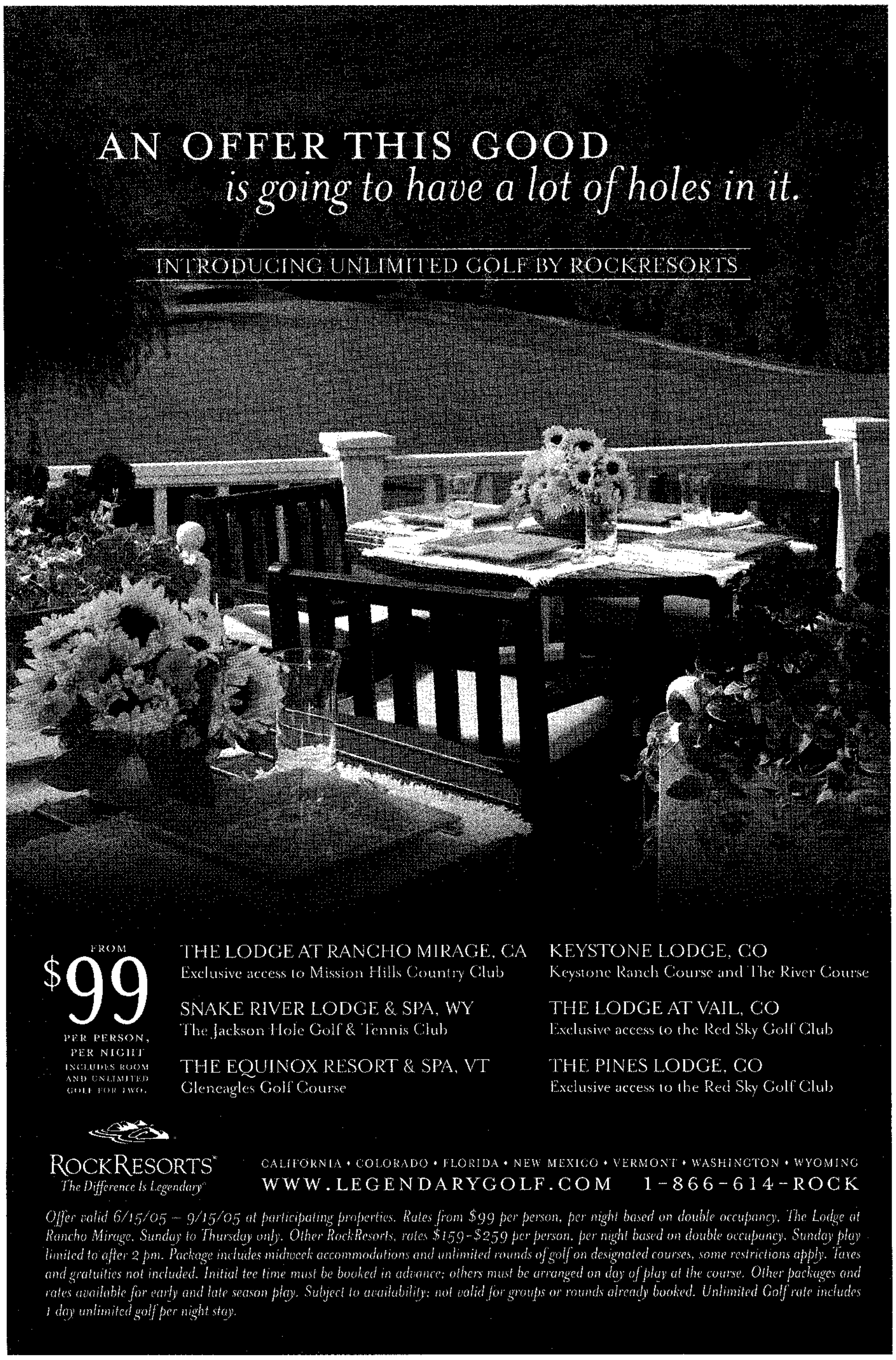
For more information on RockResorts' Unlimited Golf Package, visit legendarygolf.com or call 866-614-7625.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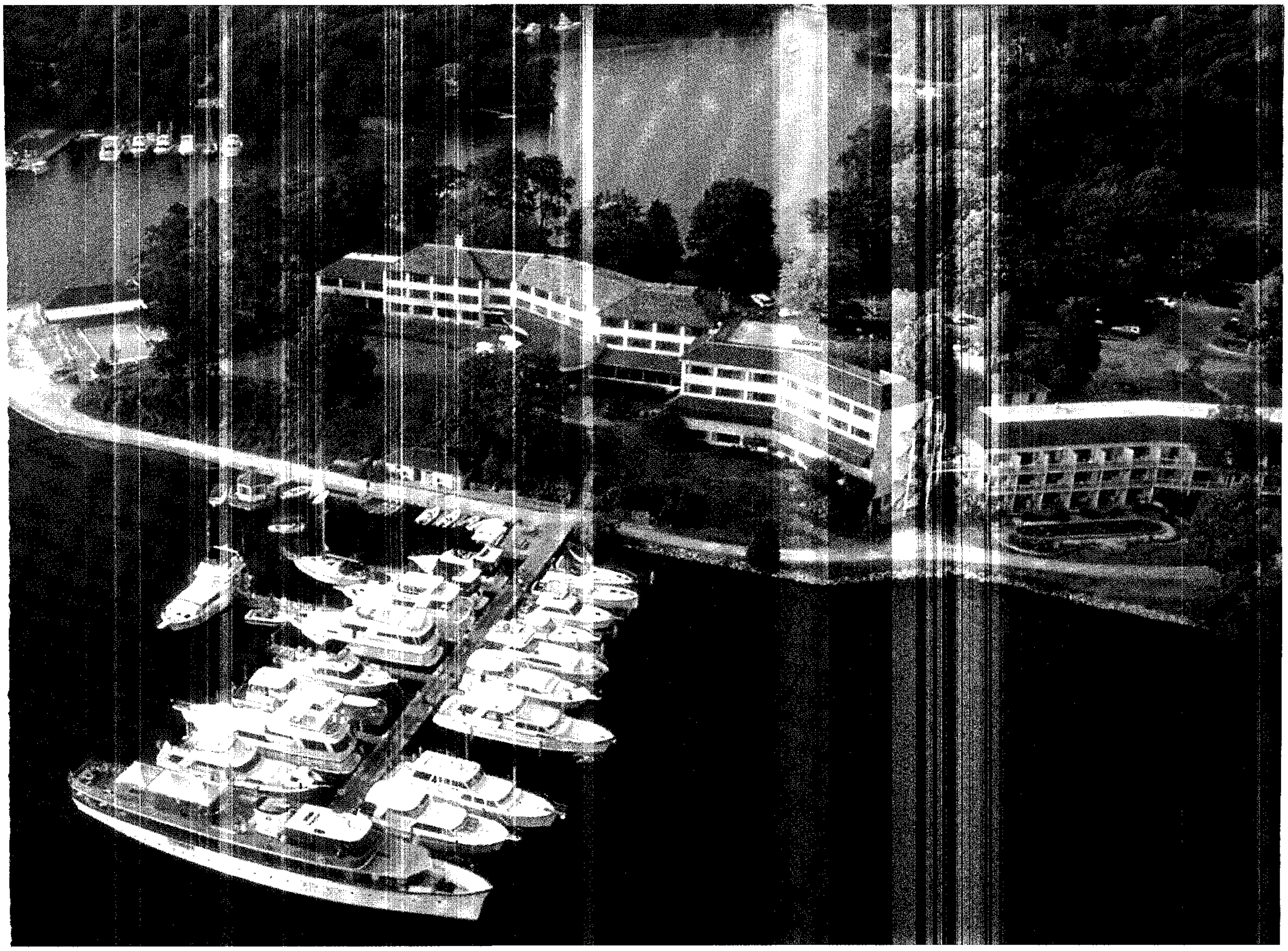

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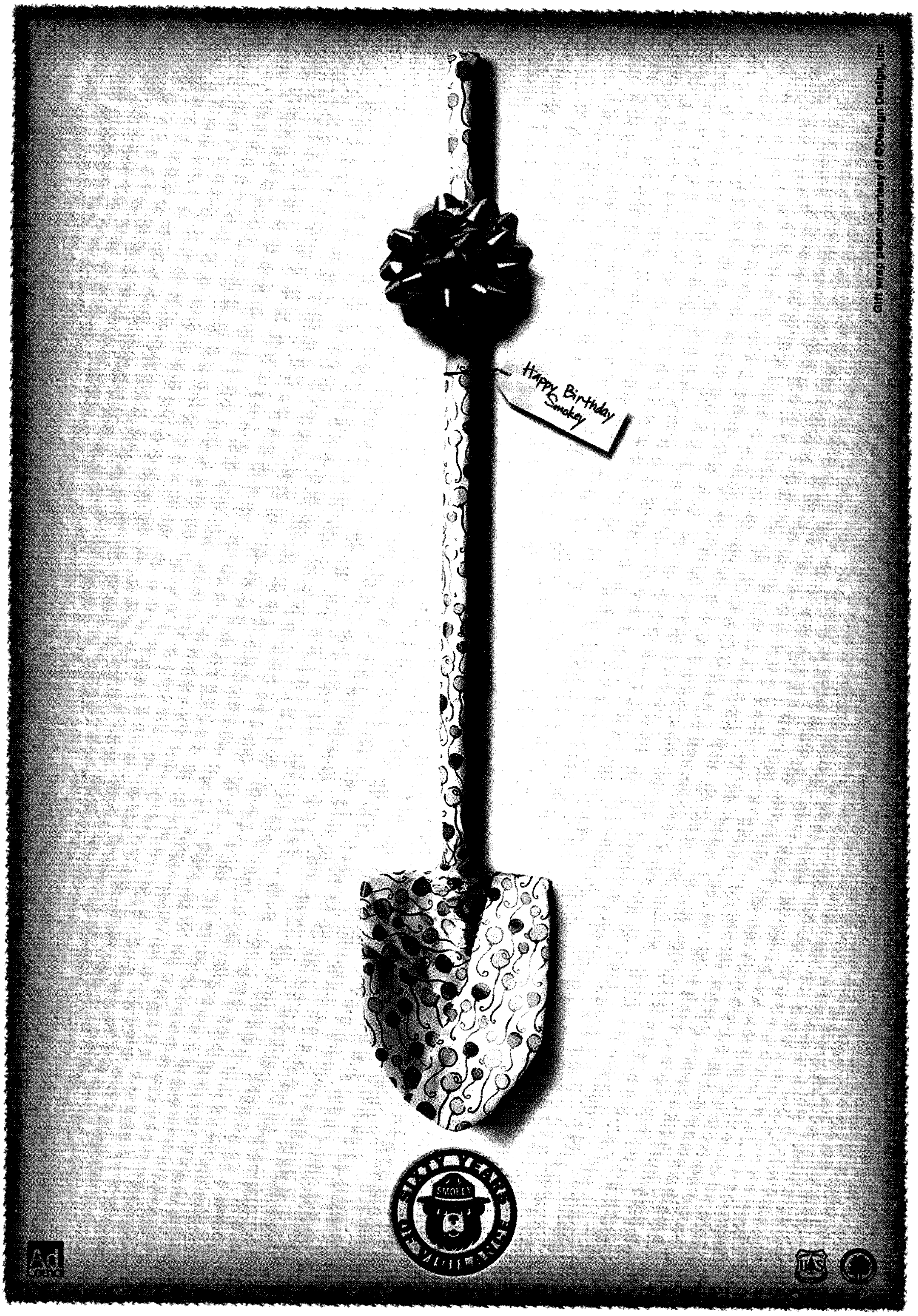
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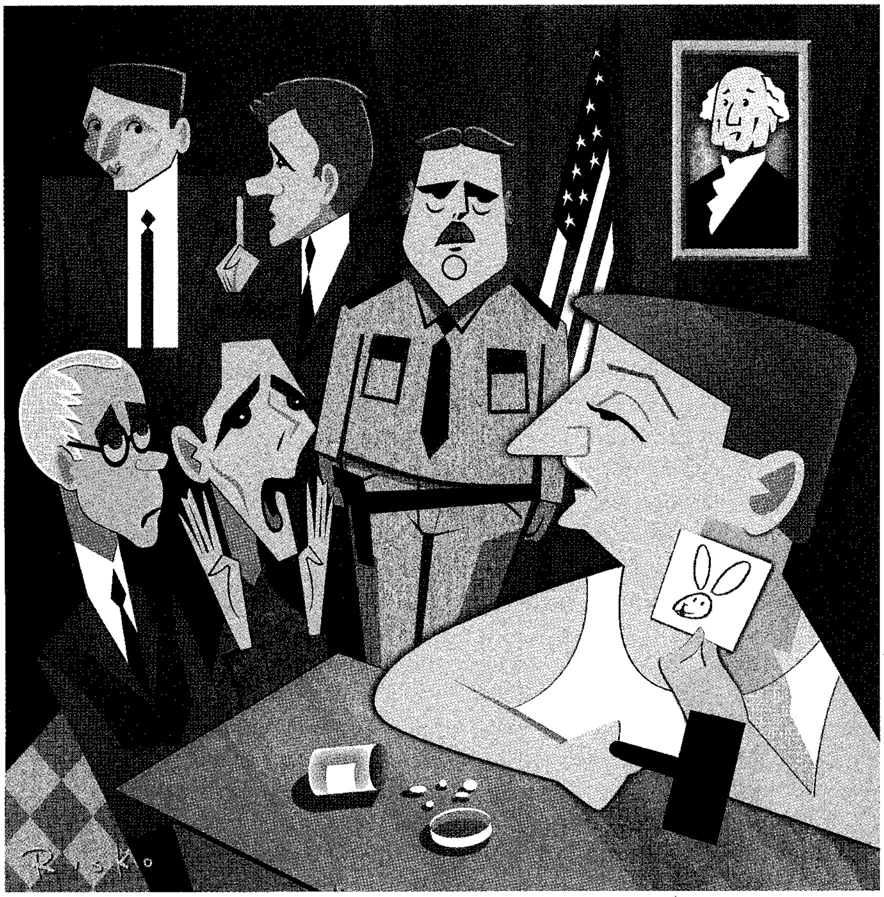
THE THEATRE

SCOUNDREL TIME

Trials and tribulations on Broadway and Off.

BY JOHN LAHR

History, H. G. Wells once said, is "a race between education and catastrophe." Sometimes—now, for instance—catastrophe appears to be winning, and the contest is almost too unbearable to watch. In such deracinated moments, only a world turned upside down—the world of farce, in other words—works both as an apt metaphor for the caprice of nations and as a release from it. The giddy sophistry of David Mamet's "Romance" (well directed by Neil Pepe, at the Atlantic Theatre Company) is a case in point.



Mamet's "Romance" does for anti-Semitism what "Oleanna" did for feminism.

ROBERT RISKO

At the beginning of the play, set in a New York City courtroom, a distracted judge (the hilarious Larry Bryggman) tries to focus on the stonewalling tactics of a defendant (Steven Goldstein) on the stand, while the defense attorney (Christopher Evan Welch) complains about the prosecution's aggressive cross-examination: "What is it, a 'charade,' a 'vaudeville'?" In Mamet's hands, it's really burlesque. "Peace. Is that not the theme of the week?" the judge asks, flourishing a copy of the *Times* from behind the bench and wielding a gavel he refers to as his "little hammer." "May we not have peace?" The headline refers to a peace conference that is taking place in the city, but, while the politicos in the outside world want closure, the farceur wants chaos. Mamet, the son of a lawyer who won a case in the Supreme Court, knows all about legal punctilio, and he has great fun bringing mayhem to the ritual. When the judge sneezes—his hay-fever pills are making him drowsy—the defense attorney offers a "Gesundheit," which prompts the smarmy prosecutor (the expert Bob Balaban) to chime in, "Your Honor. I do not wish to descend to the 'picayune,' but as my colleague has wished you gesundheit, I feel that I must wish you gesundheit." He adds, "In fairness to the state."

Mamet, who is a connoisseur of fiasco, doesn't want to be fair to anyone; his disgust at *Homo sapiens* is evident in the torture he inflicts on his characters. In this merry-go-round of meanings, war seems to break out everywhere: in the newspaper, in the courtroom, in the legal offices, even in the prosecutor's home. Onstage, at least, it's an exhilarating spectacle. Take, for instance, a face-off between the defendant, a Jewish chiropractor, and his attorney, who is stewing both because his guilty client has insisted on taking the stand and because he's going to miss his son's Church Youth League hockey game. Cornered by the prosecution, the defendant fires his lawyer for refusing to provide "an alternative" explanation. "*Why did you* go to *law* school? If you don't want to *lie*?" he asks. "You SICK FUCK," the attorney replies. "Day after day, *supporting* you; nodding at your infantile hypocrisies. This sick Talmudic, Jewish . . ." He pauses, then adds, "Ohmigod." His anti-Semitic outburst opens up a daring comic opportunity, which Mamet seizes with all his hyperbolic gifts. ("Romance" does for anti-Semitism what "Oleanna" did for feminism.) Backpedalling, with excuses about his son and his recent divorce, the attorney profusely begs forgiveness:

> DEFENDANT: I accept your apology.
> DEFENSE ATTORNEY: Thank you. That is gracious and generous of you.
> DEFENDANT: I understand your anxiety.
> DEFENSE ATTORNEY: Thank you.
> DEFENDANT: I know that you are a religious man . . .
> DEFENSE ATTORNEY: . . . yes, I am . . .
> DEFENDANT: . . . that you're taking your son to a church function . . .
> DEFENSE ATTORNEY: . . . the Youth Hockey game . . .
> DEFENDANT: . . . and that if you arrived late . . .
> DEFENSE ATTORNEY: . . . yes . . .
> DEFENDANT: . . . you might have trouble getting the priest's dick out of your son's ass.
> DEFENSE ATTORNEY: You fuckin' kike, you sick, *sick* . . .
> BAILIFF: . . . you fellas want lunch?

The escalating tit-for-tat—a battle of annihilating racist epithets—is the Arab-

Israeli crisis in embryo. "You people can't order a cheese sandwich without mentioning the Holocaust," the defense attorney says; the defendant snidely challenges the "fairy tale" of Christianity ("Oooh, they rolled the stone away from the cave . . . while the porridge cooled"). Across town, the prosecutor and his thong-clad boyfriend, Bernard (the excellent Keith Nobbs), are also shouting curses at each other. Bernard has burned the roast and, it seems, his bridges. The defense attorney interrupts the imbroglio by calling with the news that the defendant has hit upon a way to solve the Middle East crisis; he demands a continuance. The prosecutor refuses, which leads to another courtroom showdown, in front of the judge, who is in some sort of demented fugue state. "Where am I?" he asks, entering late. His world seems to be going mad with explanations. He learns, among other things, that the prosecutor is a homosexual ("What is it you guys actually 'do'?" he asks), that Shakespeare was a Jew ("No Christian can write that good"), and that the defense team's solution for the Middle East is a little readjustment of the vertebrae "to restore mental balance to the leaders." The gas of argument fills the judge until he finally explodes: "You come *in* here, with your, your hifalutin tales of peace and, all the what, the lions will lie down with the lambs. . . . *Bullshit*, is what I say." He continues, "Because the fucking *lambs* are *already* lying down with the lambs. . . . At *nighttime*. What are the fucking lambs gonna do? Yawn yawn, time to turn in, think I'll go bunk with the *lions*? . . . The *lions*, on the other hand: They're never *ever* going to lie down with the lambs. THEY'RE GOING TO EAT THEM."

A stage-managed truth-and-reconciliation moment restores harmony to the warring factions and symmetry to the proceedings. The defendant admits that he's guilty; the prosecutor admits that he never took the bar exam; the judge admits that he's Jewish. This is inspired folderol, which registers despair even as it relieves it. At one point during the finale, someone asks the wayward judge, "Is there anything you know for sure?" The question haunts the havoc, the stridency, and the fun.

No questions, comic or otherwise, are answered in Stephen Adly Guirgis's woeful "The Last Days of Judas Iscariot" (a LAByrinth Theatre Company production at the Public), another courtroom drama, which presents the case for Judas. O.K., Judas betrayed Jesus to the authorities for thirty pieces of silver, had second thoughts, hanged himself, and, according to the Gospels of Mark and Matthew, left Jesus with the firm impression that it would have been better for Judas if he'd never been born. But, evidently, in the eyes of the defense attorney, arguing the case from Purgatory, this is no biggie.

Judas is crucial to the drama of Christ's salvation; his story has also served as a useful cautionary tale in emerging Christian communities. Narrative, however, is something to which Guirgis seems not to have given much thought. Why, he naïvely asks in his murky meditation, which has sparks of ideas but no satisfying pattern, can't the all-forgiving Jesus forgive his betrayer? Mother Teresa is called on to invoke Thomas Merton and the sin of despair; Sigmund Freud weighs in with an insanity plea; Simon the Zealot explains that Judas' act was a way of goading Jesus to action ("Get it on and start kicking ass like He was supposed to"). The characters speak in the piquant vulgate of the street, which can be funny, but too many of the actors can't enunciate well enough to be heard. (If the LAByrinth's multicultural project wants to reach across classes, it will also have to speak audibly across them.) In the midst of all this overheated special pleading, which is made up almost entirely of monologues, thoughts are described but not dramatized.

Under the aegis of the LAByrinth, and with Philip Seymour Hoffman as his director, Guirgis has written three very promising plays: "In Arabia, We'd All Be Kings," "Jesus Hopped the A Train," and "Our Lady of 121st Street." What's particularly disappointing about this new production, which lacks rhythm in the staging as well as in the writing, is that Guirgis does not seem to have been well served by the company; it has indulged him instead of challenging him. Everything about the play feels rushed, undisciplined, and unfocussed; the prolix script has gone from conception to production without penetration. I admire Guirgis and Hoffman. I look forward to their next collaboration. It gives me no pleasure to conclude that this is one I'd prefer to forget as soon as possible.

"That Judas. What a character, huh," the penny-ante American con man Freddy Benson says, using the Bible as part of his opening shuck in "Dirty Rotten Scoundrels" (at the Imperial). The abuse of trust, which earns Judas eternal damnation downtown, is a cause for celebration on Broadway. Here, in a gleeful translation of the film to the musical stage, Freddy (Norbert Leo Butz) joins forces, first as student, then as partner, with the swank European hustler Lawrence Jameson (the charming John Lithgow). They are dedicated to the philosophy that where there's a will there's a wallet—a sentimental education in crime that might as well be called "My Fair Felon."

The show, which is as sprightly as a trick pony, almost stumbles at its first hurdle—an opening number that poorly dissects the psychology of the con and has none of the wit that distinguishes much of David Yazbek's good-natured score. But the irresistible mischief of Norbert Butz is soon onstage, and the comic engine of Jeffrey Lane's perky book revs up. Here, for once, a musical builds to a genuinely well-written narrative payoff. Yazbek can be funny in song, which is no easy feat; he also has a rich vocabulary. Butz gets the two best numbers: "Love Is My Legs," a satiric love song, and "Great Big Stuff," a showstopping hip-hop contemplation of the Good Life that awaits: "Oh give me a home where the centerfolds roam / Guccione on the phone, He got a party going on— / And Hef'll have me over / To play some naked twister / Blotto in the Grotto / With a Playmate and her sister."

It will come as no surprise to those who have seen the movie that in the end the con men are conned. For them, and for us, the thrill is in the hunt. With its clever asides and its winks at Broadway storytelling convention, the show lets the audience play along. The musical owes a lot of its twinkle to the cunning and the command of its agile director, Jack O'Brien, who has had hits in recent years with "The Full Monty" and "Hairspray." "Dirty Rotten Scoundrels" makes it a trifecta of triumphs. ♦

ON TELEVISION

MODEL CITIZENS

Tyra Banks lines up the future of fashion.

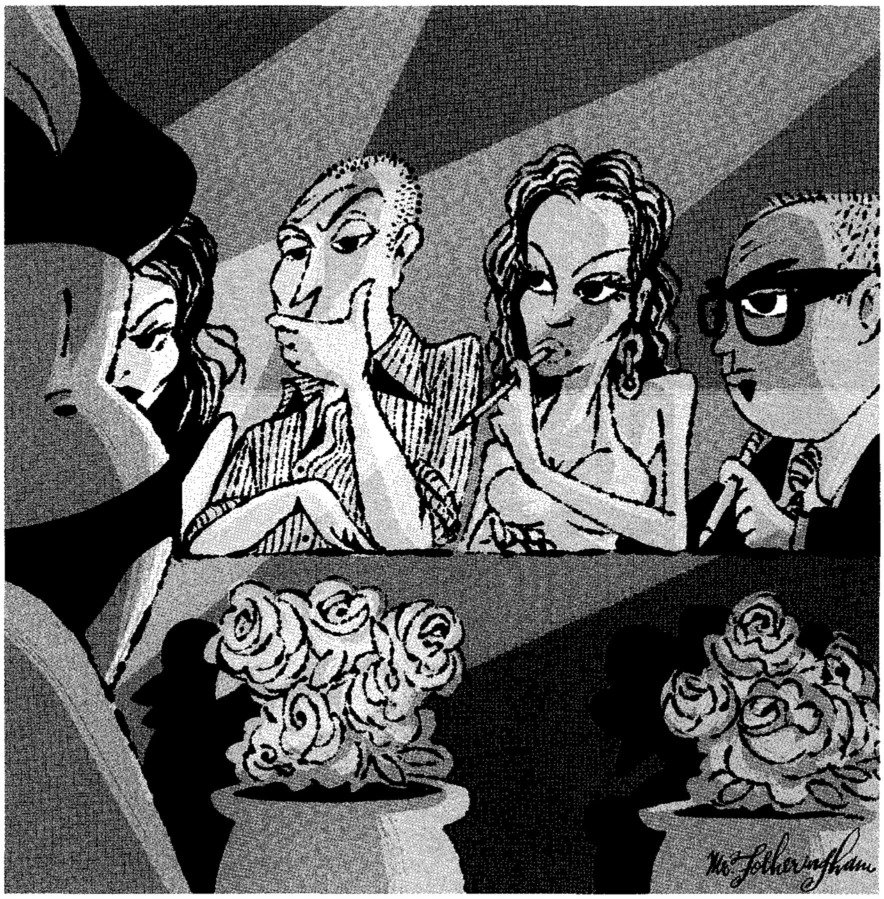
BY NANCY FRANKLIN

If you watched the first episode of the fourth installment of UPN's "America's Next Top Model" last week, you may have noticed that I was not one of the contestants competing for the hundred-thousand-dollar contract with Cover Girl cosmetics, the model-management contract with Ford Models, and the spread in *Elle*, even though I fulfilled many of the show's stated eligibility requirements: I am not currently a candidate for public office; I am not shorter than five feet seven; my age is between eighteen and twenty-seven if you divide it by any number between 1.778 and 2.667; and, to the best of my recollection, I have not had previous experience as a model in a national campaign within the past five years. As for the stipulation that applicants must "exhibit . . . a willingness to share their most private thoughts in an open forum of strangers," is there anyone left on the planet who doesn't fit into this category? Also, I can totally work it, bring it, feel it, slam it, serve it, and own it—to use the terms that the fashion photographers, advisers, and judges fall back on when coaching the contestants or explaining their decision to keep them on the show or boot them.

The reason I'm not on the show is that I didn't want a tarantula crawling on my face; I'm funny that way. In a photo shoot for a jewelry ad in the third installment of "A.N.T.M.," last fall, the models had to pose with a tarantula, either on or near their face. In one shot, the huge beast adjusts itself so that one leg is on the girl's eyelid and another is in the corner of her mouth. Another girl—the one with the most assertive personality—freaks out and cries, because she's terrified of spiders and so much rides on her being able to act like a pro. The contestants all regularly comment on one another to the camera, and one of them says during this scene, "Eva's really stressing. She's worried that her inability to perform with the spider on her face is going to send her home, so I don't think that she really is cut out to be America's Next Top Model." Since I, too, have an inability to perform with spiders on my face, I thought I wasn't cut out for it, either. But Eva was able to pull herself together, and she looked gorgeous in her picture with Spidey—*and* she went on to win the entire competition. So I guess I should have gone ahead and sent in an application, arachnophobia be damned.

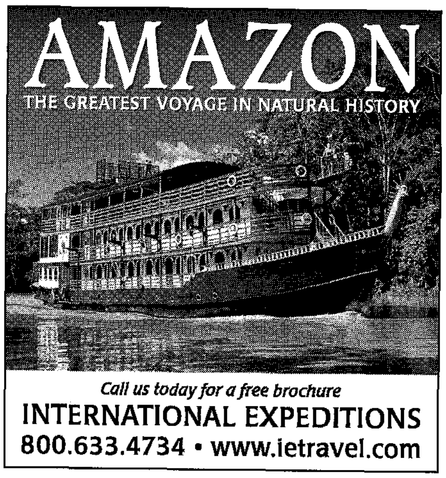
The supermodel Tyra Banks created "America's Next Top Model," and she is also the host and one of the show's executive producers. The aspiring models view her both as the bearer of a magic ticket out of poverty, obscurity, stripping, or waitressing and as a comforting, maternal, Oprah-like figure. Even while she is pondering which chick will be thrown out of the nest each week, Banks dispenses plentiful hugs to her charges, at one point getting down on a bathroom floor to console a distressed girl. During each episode, she makes sure the contestants understand the hardships of the modelling life—facing rejection, working in countries where they don't speak the language, putting makeup on in a moving limousine—and gives them the kind of challenges they would face as pros, such as wearing stiletto heels while posing in a bikini on volcanic rock along the coast of Jamaica. Oh, my God—now *I'm* crying.

One refreshing aspect of "A.N.T.M." is that there is more diversity among the contestants than one usually sees in reality shows. In the last series, or "cycle," there was an Indian woman, and all the cycles have featured several black semifinalists, as well as a couple of plus-size hopefuls. (The show has not, however, stepped up—to use another of its recurring exhortatory phrases—when it comes to Asian and Latino women. Not that United Nations-style casting guarantees loftiness or anything. The Indian woman believed that she was "setting a goal for



Dickinson, Barker, Banks, and Marin: "America's Next Top Model" 's arbiters of style.

EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM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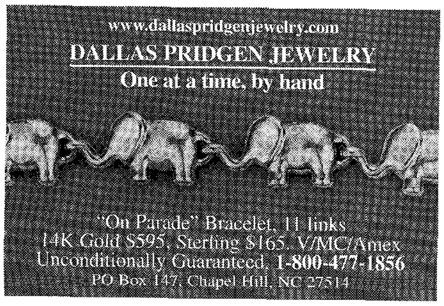
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Indians: They're either engineers or doctors. But we can go outside of that. We can use our intelligence in this industry.") Banks, who has healthy, womanly curves, has included cautionary tales relating to the body-image problems that occur in the modelling business; the last cycle had a finalist who was a half inch under six feet tall and weighed a hundred and fifteen pounds, and another confessed to having problems with food, though she balked at the label "bulimic," because she didn't throw up after every single meal. Comments about the tall drink of water were left to the girls, who all live together for eight weeks and have the usual fights and dish the usual dirt on one another; for the model who was avowedly obsessed with thinness, Banks brought in a nutritionist, but the young woman resisted help—an accurate illustration of the difficulty that even experts often have in treating such disorders. It's hard not to think, though, that it was a little unfair to the extreme cases to let them get so far along in the competition, since they didn't have the remotest chance of winning; they're there, it seems, mainly to short-circuit potential complaints from viewers who may consider the modelling profession itself partly responsible for the fact that so many young women hate their bodies.

Much as Banks wants to come across as a hey-girlfriend confidante to the contestants, she in fact heightens the atmosphere of anxiety, by drawing out the elimination at the end of each episode for as long as possible, and by emphasizing that the loser will have to leave "immediately." For some contestants, immediately may not be soon enough. One girl from Oklahoma, after living in a gigantic suite at the Waldorf-Astoria for a while, had simply had it. "In Oklahoma, people look at me," she said. "I don't feel like people are looking at me here. I'm not having that much fun." While the opportunity these women are angling for is real, and even has benefits for the losers—two of whom appeared on UPN sitcoms last week—you can't help wondering why they want it so much, when success in the world they're trying to enter seems to hinge on how much of themselves they can make disappear. In this week's episode, Banks says to the girls, "Part of being a top model is about being a blank palette." And the stylist for the photo shoots, Jay Manuel, says after a session, "My concern with Toccara is that she allows too much of her personality to get in the way." At one point during a shoot, when a model strikes a less than erect pose, she is rewarded with this evaluation: "I love the broken-down-doll look." In the third cycle, the girls have to walk into a room wearing high heels that are two sizes too small and a dress that is too tight—the point being that a model has to smile through all kinds of discomfort. Nolé Marin, the fashion director of a magazine for gay men, and one of the arbiters of style who sit in judgment at the end of each episode—the others are Banks, a photographer named Nigel Barker, and the former supermodel Janice Dickinson—says to one of the less graceful girls, "You look like the broken Tin Man. You needed a major oil job." Sometimes looking broken is good; sometimes it's not. It's all so confusing! This is actually among the most humane comments heard during the series from Marin, who is—and let's ourselves be fashion judges for a moment here—a chubby little bespectacled bald man with an unattractive soul patch. None of the judges offer much in the way of constructive criticism; it's always either "I'm loving the look, honey. I'm *loving* the look" or "Lose the pearls! Ugh! This is a model contest, not a secretary contest." (And yet—one more schmatte in the bundle of contradictions that is the fashion world—Mikimoto pearls are given out as a reward to a couple of the models.) Dickinson is a stun gun in human form, zealously zapping the girls as they parade before her. Referring to a picture of the bulimic woman, who is five feet ten, weighs a hundred and thirty pounds, and has a flat stomach, she says, "You look about two months pregnant there."

"America's Next Top Model" is fascinating, if you like trying to figure out life's little mysteries, such as how it could possibly be that someone has "wanted to model since I was three years old," and why models are trained to walk like people who have hip dysplasia. If you already think that models are vacuous, apparently you are not alone: even models themselves make that assumption. As one of the contestants, who is surprised (and shouldn't be) by how much Banks has on the ball, says, "I mean, you see Tyra, and you think boobs and lingerie. And she's got a brain—I mean, who woulda thought?" ♦

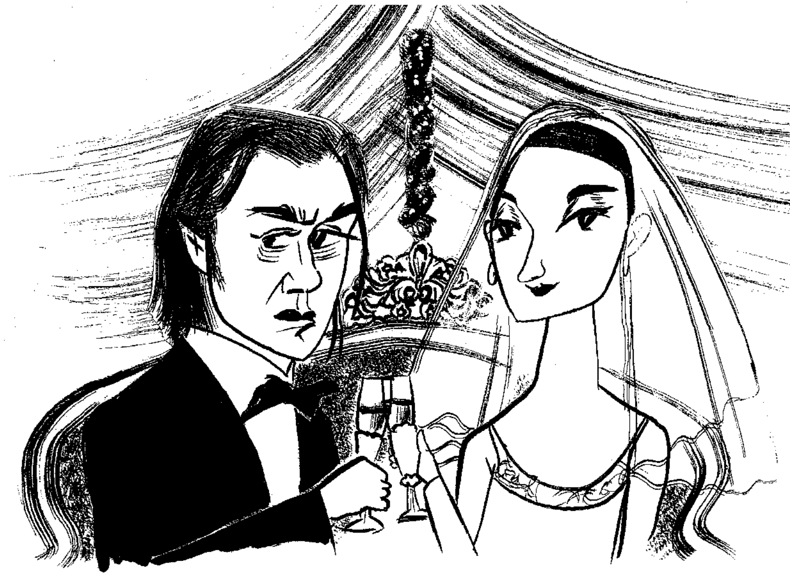
THE CURRENT CINEMA

BEGINNINGS

"Head On."

BY ANTHONY LANE

A film that starts with not one but two attempted suicides could never be accused of overdosing on the feel-good factor. Yet it would be a pity if the new German picture "Head On," which plays through March at the Angelika Film Center, were to be treated as no more than a pit stop for the aggressively downhearted. So how should the movie be sold? I have seen it hailed as a blenderful of sex, drugs, and rock and roll, and all three are indeed on brazen display, yet anybody in search of a roiling formlessness will have to look elsewhere. You could laud the writer and director, Fatih Akin, for laying bare the lives of Turkish *Gastarbeiter* in modern Germany, but that announcement of social worthiness is enough to send most moviegoers fleeing into the arms of Vin Diesel. All I can say is that you should see "Head On," and that, even if you end up hating it, there will be no denying the fact that you have been through something and that, if you are still foolish and hopeful enough to let movies get to you, the person who went into the theatre will not be quite the same as the person who comes out.



Birol Ünel and Sibel Güner play troubled Turkish immigrants in Germany.

TOM BACHTELL

The original title is "Gegen die Wand," or "Against the Wall," and that, you may be distressed to learn, is no metaphor. On a maleficent night in Hamburg, Cahit (Birol Ünel) steers his car into a wall, on the understanding that therein lies the most direct route to oblivion. Cahit is a hairy brute, whose job is to harvest the empty bottles from the damp floor of a night club, and whose nose has functioned, you would guess, as the bull's-eye of other men's assaults; the prospect that he might, in the alchemical course of the movie, turn back into a beautiful man is beyond comprehension. Recovering in a psychiatric hospital, he meets Sibel (Sibel Güner), a fellow-Turk and a patient, who spies him in a waiting room and comes straight to the point. "Will you marry me?" she asks. He brushes her off, she persists, and they sneak off campus, as it were, for a companionable drink. In the midst of their talk, the camera retreats to a polite distance and we start to relax, whereupon Sibel picks up a beer bottle, smashes it, and, with the reflex speed

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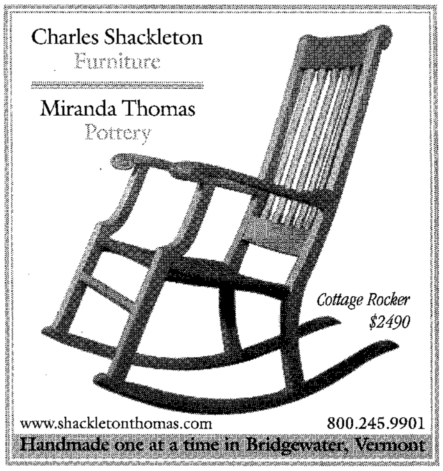

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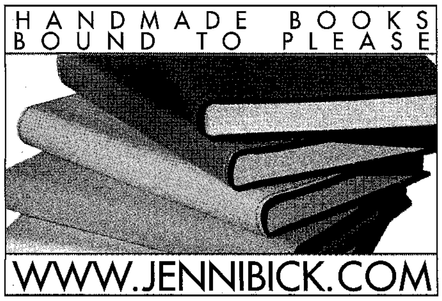

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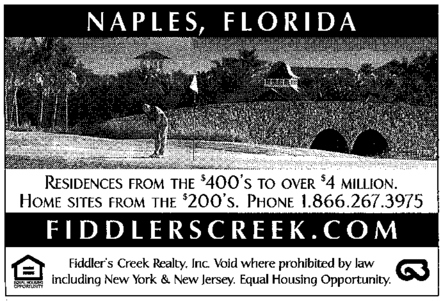

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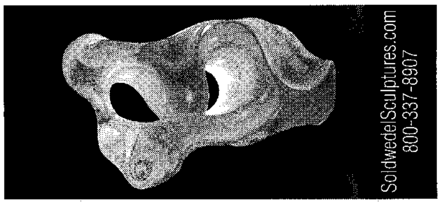

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of a Ping-Pong player, swipes it across her wrist.

Sibel's precise condition is never established. Her mind is certainly splintered, to the dismay of her mother, yet Sibel herself locates her frustration in the tight (or, as she feels, smothering) embrace of Turkish tradition, to the disgust of her aging father (Demir Gökgöl). He is a true paterfamilias, with eyes like coals under their beetling brows, and his grumpiness grows both funnier and more frightening when Cahit, looking as shifty as an unemployed porn star, comes around to ask for Sibel's hand. This is a match made in Hell. Both have been released from the care of the state, but neither of them cares for the other, and Cahit is merely helping Sibel to slip her family shackles. (Mind you, they always converse in German, and that scorn for their mother tongue has the taste of an intimate pact.) She reserves the right, as a wife, to drink, dance, and sleep with other men, though never with her husband. What he expects from the deal is hard to fathom, although its sheer novelty, perhaps, offers respite from his dogged indifference to life. What happens, of course, in the rest of "Head On" is that the marriage of convenience smolders, and then blazes, into love.

The beauty of the movie is all in the conflagration. Fatih Akin deals not in the earnest heart-to-heart but in the spark of eye-to-eye; if these unhappy souls are releasing any secrets, they are coded in the fleeting gestures of the body. Cahit's apartment is a pigpen, so Sibel sorts it out ("It's like a chick bomb exploded in here," he says), but then she cuckolds him, and he—more upset than he would like to admit—trashes the place once more, even shooting their wedding photo with an air rifle. Look again, however, and you realize that the slug went through *his* image, not hers. At stake here is a man fighting his way out of self-loathing, a hard scrabble that will touch a nerve with any Dostoyevsky readers who happen to be in the theatre—as will the lovely, deluded smile that spreads across Sibel's face as she strolls, in wide shot, along a sunlit street, having spent her wedding night in the arms of another man.

Cahit himself is no holy innocent. He finds comfort not just in beer but in the muscled arms of his drinking buddy and occasional lover Maren (Catrin Striebeck). Since Mercedes McCambridge died, last year, I've been waiting for a rock-hard broad to storm our screens, and here she comes. Maren wears an anti-charm bracelet made of chain, she has sex with Cahit as if wrestling a lightly oiled leopard, and the shot of the two of them playing nude backgammon afterward may be the best postcoital moment ever filmed. That is the driving tactic of "Head On"—a determination to let comedy and intensity, the punkish and the plangent, kick at each other's heels. Hence the extraordinary switchback as Cahit and Sibel creep toward mutual acceptance (she rebuffs a suitor with the words "I am a married Turkish woman," suddenly struck by the thought that she could yet be happy), only to be blocked at the last minute by a dumb jolt of violence that lands Cahit in jail. She seeks refuge with their friend Seref (Güven Kiraç), who offers her a bed, takes the couch for himself, and sings her a Turkish lament. Our hearts soften, whereupon he starts playing air bozuk, if you please—twanging at nothing in the dark, to make the poor woman laugh.

This is not just pliable filmmaking; it is an exercise in worldliness, in a feel for the cracks and warps of circumstance, which is all the more startling when you learn that the director is thirty-one. Akin was born in Hamburg, to Turkish parents, and one of the virtues of his movie is its refusal to play the blame game. He is in the business neither of mauling Germany for its treatment of Turkish workers nor of turning on his own kind. He simply recognizes that, wherever one nation is playing host to another, be it with good or ill will, there is an unmissable chance—call it an obligation—for both parties, host and guest, to tell stories of themselves. Not lies but stories, such as France recounted in "La Haine," in 1995, such as we saw more recently in films like "Lilya 4-Ever" and "In This World," and such as we are not seeing in American movies. I can imagine the ponytailed Cahit as a distant European cousin of the John Travolta character in "Pulp Fiction," and "Head On," in its wry ferocity, is the sort of picture that Quentin Tarantino could, should, and would be making if he took the trouble to steep himself in the lived existence of other cultures and not purely in the sealed environment of their movies. To make matters easier, he wouldn't even have to leave his own land. America is the proudest destination for the world's migrants, honored by Chaplin in "The Immigrant" as early as 1917, and still boiling with dramatic opportunity. And what have we been offered of late? "My Big Fat Greek Wedding" and, heaven preserve us, "Spanglish," a film that whisks us through six years in the life of its Mexican heroine in a single voice-over and does not deign to slow down until she starts working for white folks.

"Head On" loses a touch of momentum as the action switches to Istanbul; the culture clash lets up, although you could argue that Sibel is by now so Westernized that Turkey feels like a foreign state. She flies there in disgrace, gets a crummy job, writes to the imprisoned Cahit in Germany, and slides into her old dangerous ways. You should steel yourself for a bloody sequence on a cobbled street at night, but the worst thing about it is the look on Sibel's face as she wheels around to face a trio of male taunters—the black-eyed look of a vampire who no longer wants to be undead. She is back where she began, with nothing to live for, although even here we may recall the words of a shrink at the hospital: "If you want to end your life, end it. But you don't have to die to do that." And so to the final act of the film, with Cahit released and rejuvenated, and the promise—though, be advised, it is no more than a promise—of fresh starts.

As you reach the tacit close of this often clamorous film, you can hardly believe what a distance it seems to have travelled. Not just geographically, from graying northern suburbs to the banks of the Bosporus, but from the infernally punishing to a stunned and bewildered peace. (Paradise would be too much to ask.) The unadorned closeups of Cahit and Sibel, as they face each other naked in a hotel room, is a wondrous echo of that instant in the psychiatrist's waiting room at the start, when their eyes met and their destinies clicked and locked, although, in order to reach this reënactment, they have traversed a limbo of their own devising. "Life's what you make it," the song cries over the end credits, again and again. In most American films, such a sentiment would be little more than cheery exhortation. With grip, verve, and a kind of hurtling heartbreak, "Head On" reminds us that it can also be a warning. ♦

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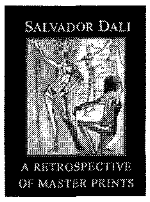

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THE BACK PAGE BY PAUL RUDNICK

ROYAL WEDDING DAY SCHEDULE FOR HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH

7:00 A.M. Arise and greet corgis. Tell them it's a very special day: they'll be trying new Iams Lamb & Wild Rice in Gravy.

7:30 A.M. Breakfast with Prince Philip. Remind him that, even if they offer him a Jaguar, Al Qaeda are not friends.

8:00 A.M. Pick Corgi of the Day. Comfort and encourage remaining corgis.

8:30 A.M. Phone Fergie. Get her to send Camilla Weight Watchers frozen lasagna as gag wedding gift.

9:00 A.M. Answer correspondence. Send Charles and Camilla a five-pound note as a wedding gift, with card reading, "So sorry can't attend ceremony in person. Hope face on this will suffice."

9:30 A.M. Gather corgis to watch TiVo of "Desperate Housewives." Discuss how much more romantic show would be if all characters were corgis.

10:00 A.M. Open local hospital. If asked about Charles and Camilla, reply, "Are they here? Has there been an accident?"

10:30 A.M. Summon Andrew and Edward. Inspect hair loss. Close eyes and do "eeny, meeny, miney, mo" to get their hopes up.

11:00 A.M. Watch videotape of Charles's wedding to Diana. Consider Disney's request to turn ceremony into stage musical. Messenger DVD of "Shrek" to C. and C.

12:00 P.M. Lunch with corgis. Discuss Blair, Bush, Iraq—what do they think? Show them special surprise: photo mockup of U.N., with all delegates as corgis.

1:00 P.M. Phone Clint Eastwood; congratulate on Oscar. Suggest he next direct "Camilla," inspirational love story à la "Bridges of Madison County." Also suggest he play title role.

2:00 P.M. Dress up corgis as participants in low-key royal wedding. Use bits of sirloin to stimulate barking as vows. Videotape and send anonymously to BBC.

3:00 P.M. Nap. Dream of being Virgin Queen, or LaToya Jackson, anything with more dignity.

4:00 P.M. Awake. Ask secretary if C. and C. ceremony has concluded. Ask if Angelina Jolie was in attendance.

5:00 P.M. Call Charles on cell. Congratulate him, then make connection-breaking-up noises, so only words he hears are "king," "never," and "hee hee hee."

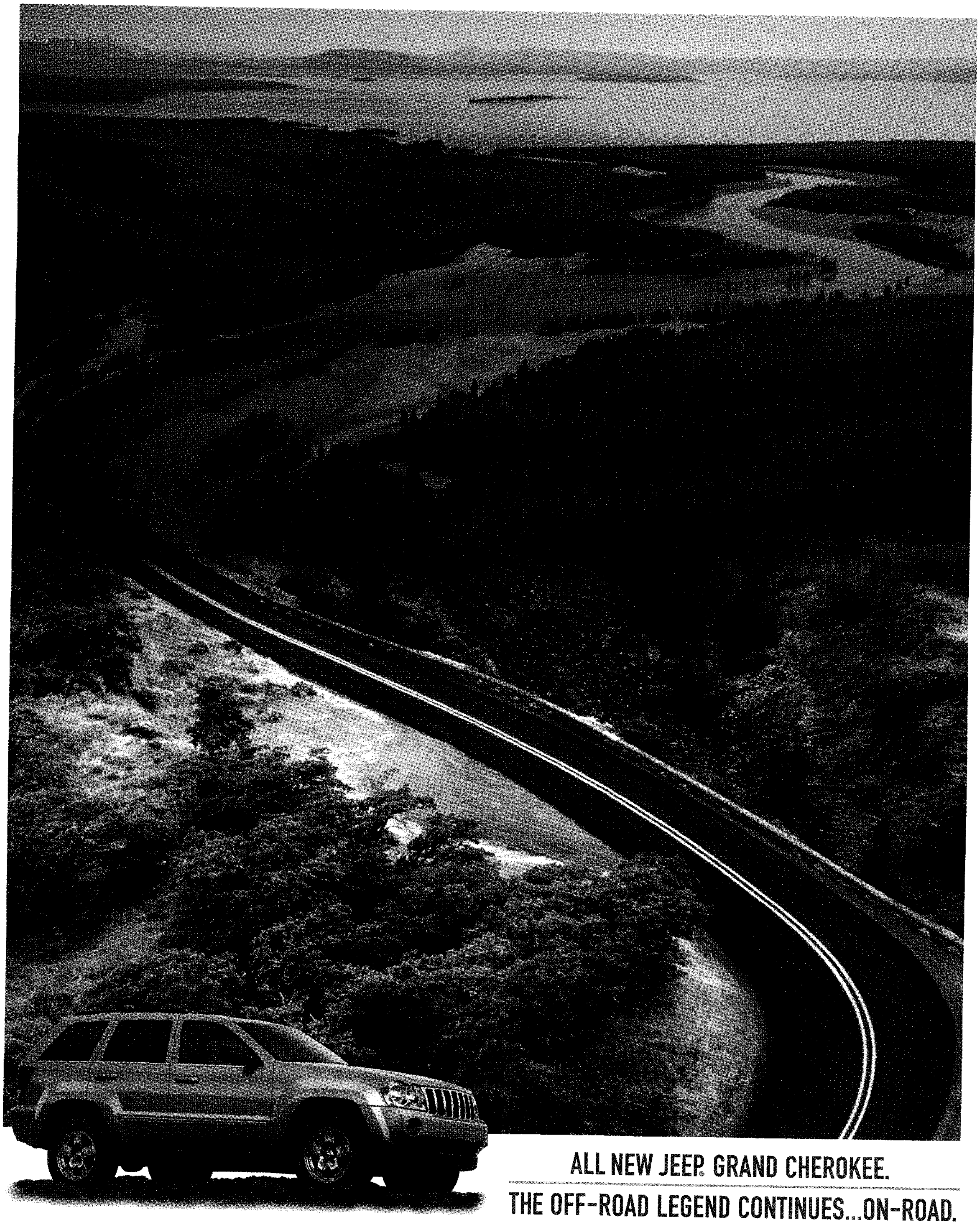
6:00 P.M. Dinner with corgis. Tell them that C. and C. are now married, just like Britney. Serve tiny wedding cake made of liver. In honor of ceremony and late Queen Mum, let corgis have bourbon.

7:00 P.M. Watch "Lost." Wonder if C. and C. will take plane on honeymoon.

8:00 P.M. Call Camilla, to interrupt wedding night. Ask if she has Prince Charles in a can. Hang up.

9:00 P.M. Read corgis "Cinderella" as bedtime story, but change all characters to corgis, so happy ending will be believable. Tell them only King Charles will be a spaniel.

10:00 P.M. Put on crown. Take Ambien.



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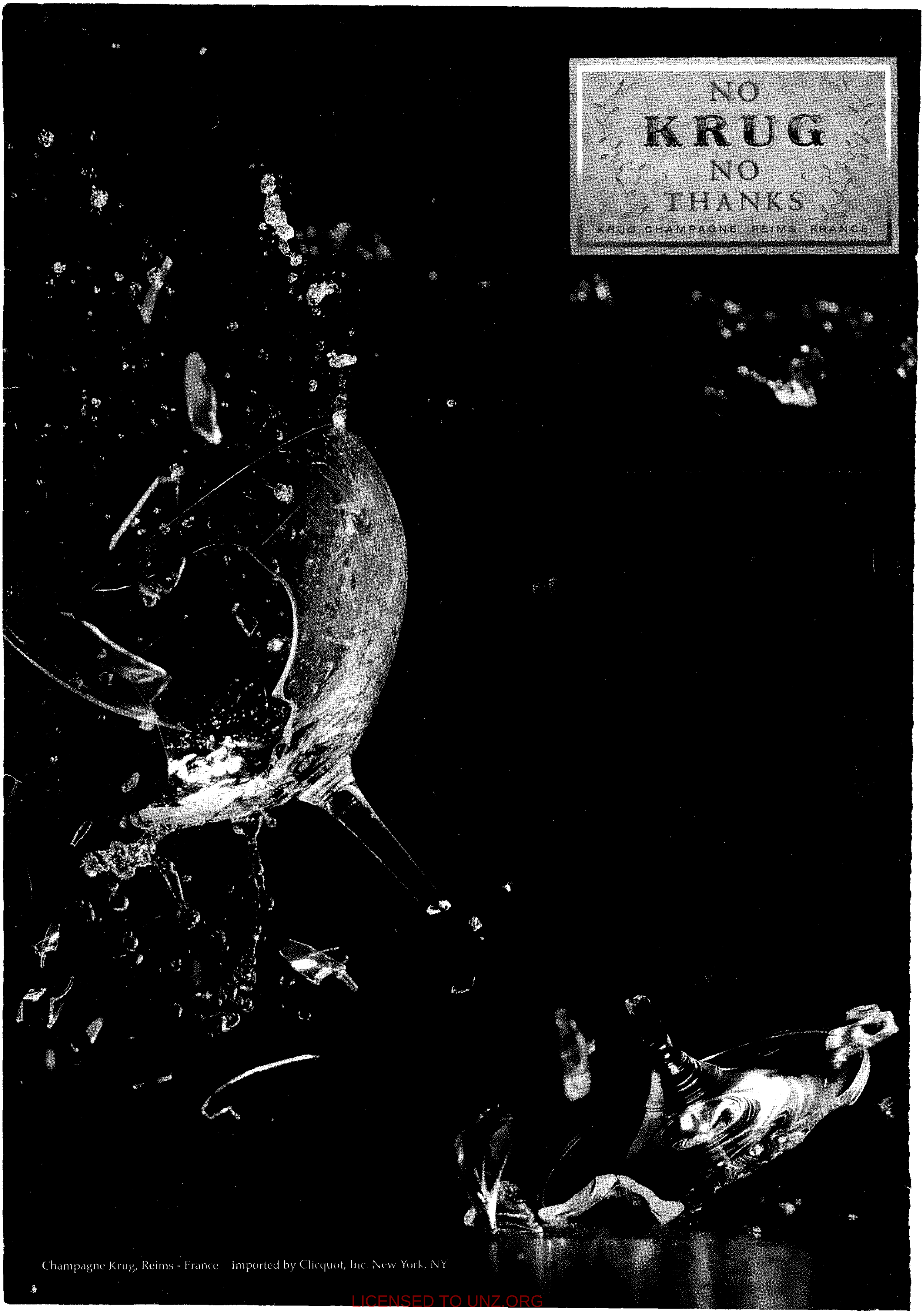
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